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A MAGICIAN'S  
SWAN SONG







WILL GOLDS顿

*Frontispiece*

# A MAGICIAN'S SWAN SONG

By

**WILL GOLDSTON**

(Founder of the Magicians' Club)

*Author of "Secrets of Famous Illusionists"*

*Profusely Illustrated*



London  
John Long, Limited  
34, 35 & 36 Paternoster Row, E.C.4

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
AT GAINSBOROUGH PRESS, ST. ALBANS  
BY FISHER, KNIGHT AND CO., LTD.

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## FOREWORD

BY

J. C. CANNELL

*Vice-President of the Magicians' Club, and  
author of the "Secrets of Houdini" (8th edition)*

**O**N the eve of his proposed retirement, Will Goldston, veteran illusionist and personal friend of the most famous magicians, tells in these pages the most intimate secrets of professional wizardry.

The exposures he makes range from the most spectacular and elaborate illusions to the smallest pocket trick. His book, indeed, is the alpha and omega of magic. He conceals nothing, hides no secrets.

The careful researches which I had to make in order to tell the public exactly how Houdini achieved his escapes and performed illusions which seemed like miracles, led me to think that I had exhausted all the resources of magic. But, after reading the proofs of this fascinating book, I realized how much I had not known.

That the public is attracted by this subject is proved by the reception received by my own work, already in its eighth edition. Its sales are still increasing in astonishing measure across the world.

I hope that this book of Goldston's will attain even dizzier heights of circulation; and I am sure it will.

The name of Will Goldston is respected in the wide fraternity of magic.

"A Magician's Swan Song" will, I believe, become a standard work.

*Press Club, London, E.C.*



# A MAGICIAN'S SWAN SONG

## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORY OF MAGIC

#### ANCIENT MAGIC

HERE is probably no art in the world so ancient as that of magic. Exactly when, and under what circumstances, magic first made its appearance in mankind's history it is impossible to say; but one thing is certain—that in very early times magic and the practice of religion were very closely associated. Indeed, magic was an essential part of religious ceremonial, and to none but the priests were the jealously-guarded secrets of magic revealed. It is an interesting reflection that this state of affairs still obtains in our present twentieth-century world. The "medicine men" of the primitive peoples of Africa and South America are actually priests, or at any rate, religious leaders. In most cases, their office is hereditary, and the secrets of their craft are handed from father to son.

It is held by philologists that the word "magic" is derived from a Sumero-Akkadian root (*imga*) which signified a priest. The Assyrians borrowed this word, and in the course of time, it became corrupted to *maga*. The chief priest was known as *rabmag*. And by the devious route of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, the word was brought to the English language, slightly altered, and slightly changed in meaning.

From an historical viewpoint, it is a pity that magic was for so long an esoteric art. So jealous were the priests of their power, that they dared not commit their secrets to paper, preferring rather to teach their successors by spoken word and practical demonstration. Thus it is that we are afforded but

a hazy idea of the nature of those "miracles" which afforded them such power over their fellow men, and permitted them to sway the destinies of nations. We may take it that most ancient priests were "seers"—i.e., they pretended to foretell the future. They probably "divined" fortunes, and "exorcized" evil spirits. They could read "signs" unintelligible to the masses; they were the only genuine interpreters of dreams. Astronomy is said to have had its beginnings in China, but it is asserted that astrology, or the art of reading the messages of the stars, was born amongst the priests of Babylon.

But these gifts, whether genuine or not, do not constitute magic as we understand it to-day. We know magic to be trickery; and the magician is he who affects an apparent miracle by perfectly natural means. There is, in the British Museum, an Egyptian manuscript of the XVIII Dynasty which recounts a magical performance given by a priest named Tchatcha-em-anh before King Khufu. The date of writing is about B.C. 1550, but the date of the performance is B.C. 3766, so it is difficult to say what degree of accuracy is preserved in this much-quoted papyrus. But for all that, it is a document of very great historical interest, for it is, I believe, the earliest known account of a public performance of magic.

According to the writer, Tchatcha-em-anh was a man of considerable skill. "He knoweth how to bind on a head which has been cut off; he knoweth how to make a lion follow him as if led by a rope; and he knoweth the number of stars of the house of Thoth."

Here, for the first time, we see something in the shape of modern magic. The first phrase has reference to what is obviously the decapitation trick. In its simplest form, most modern schoolboys know it. The "victim" is invited to take his seat in a deck chair. His upper portion is hidden momentarily with a cloth—long enough for him to thrust his head through a circular flap which has been cut in the material of the chair. When the cloth is withdrawn an apparently headless body is observed, but the head can be "restored" again in an instant. We are given no clue to the method used by this

Egyptian wizard, but it is conceivable that the principle of operation was precisely the same. If deck chairs were lacking in ancient Egypt, papyrus cloth was not.

It is not quite so easy to account for Tchatcha-em-ankh's miracle of lion taming. I have heard it suggested that this is nothing more than an example of mass hypnotism—that the performer was capable of persuading his audience that a lion was meekly following him where no lion was at all. In a similar way, popular opinion explains away the fabulous Indian Rope Trick, and I may say that I can conceive of no explanation more unsatisfying. Hypnotism of a single subject is difficult enough, as I know from my own experience. Mass *suggestion* may be a probability, but I certainly do not believe in the hypnotism of a whole collection of individuals. An alternative suggestion of *substitution* strikes me as equally absurd. It would challenge the ingenuity of any modern illusionist, aided as he is by all sorts of mechanical apparatus, to substitute a tame lion for a savage one without the knowledge of his audience. For my own part, I incline to the idea that Tchatcha-em-ankh's lion was not one half so savage as his audience imagined; or that he was gifted with such hypnotic powers that he was able to curb the beast to his own will.

This last suggestion is the most plausible. When Daniel, more than three thousand years later, was thrown into a den of untamed lions, he was able to curb them. In the light of modern knowledge, we can only assume that he was gifted with some strong hypnotic power which enabled him to overcome the savage attention of the beasts.

In Holy Writ we find continual reference to magical powers, gifts of sorcery, exorcism, and the like. Moses and Aaron were gifted with undoubted magical powers, and amongst their lesser achievements was that of casting down their rods at Pharaoh's feet, whereupon they turned to serpents. Pharaoh's wizards did likewise, and Aaron's rod swallowed up all the others. In this connection, it is interesting to recall that it is possible to reduce a snake to a position of straightness and immobility by pressure on its cervical vertebræ, which

seems to induce a temporary paralysis of the whole body. I know of no method of inducing complete rigidity in a snake; otherwise this explanation would seem to fit the case of Moses and Aaron admirably. In any case, it would not be difficult to reproduce the rod and snake effect by means of substitution.

At the time of King Saul, wizards and those possessed of "familiar spirits" were numerous. These Saul suppressed; and the story of his fear, and of his eventual visit to the Witch of En-dor are told with splendid dignity in the book of Samuel. But it is in the story of Daniel and the priests of Bel that we find one of the very rare magical *exposures* included in Scriptural writings. It will be remembered that Daniel challenged the diety of the god Bel, and scorned the idea that an image of clay and brass could devour the wine and food that was set nightly before it. To strengthen their power over the king, the priests took up his challenge; the food, according to custom, was set before the god, and the temple was securely locked. In the morning the food was gone. But Daniel was not discomfited. He had been ingenious enough to spread powdered ash round the temple, and footprints clearly indicated where the priests and their families had entered through a secret door at night to devour the food.

If we turn to Greek history, we find again that the priests, nearly always unbeknown to the people, were men gifted in powers of magic. But although, as before, the secrets were jealously guarded, we have arrived at a more enlightened age, an age of inquiry. A number of the old priestly tricks leaked out and have been handed down to us by writers like Pliny the Elder, and Philo the Byzantine. The ancient religious leaders appear to have been illusionists of a very high order. Much of the mechanism of their temples, and above all, of their altars, were most ingeniously contrived, and would appear to have required the complicity of architects and sculptors alike. Telephonic tubes; statues which dowsed sacred fires in answer to prayers at appointed times; hollowed altars containing trap doors; doors which emitted a trumpet or a thunder-clap on opening; and mirrors which threw ghostly images on to a screen of coloured, scented smoke—all these things

were to be found in the sacred temples of ancient Greece. It is very probable that the immortal Oracle at Delphi, to which so much supernatural power was ascribed, was simply a mechanical mouthpiece for the Delphic priests.

The age of Roman triumphs is notable for another reason. Hitherto, wizards, or magicians, and priests had meant one and the same thing. The performance of "miracles" had been always an essential part of religious ceremonial. Those persons outside the priest brotherhood who pretended to supernatural gifts had been ruthlessly suppressed, either by death, or by "exorcism", which too often was another word for physical torture. But now a new race of entertainers appears to delight the populace—namely, jugglers and conjurers. These men, by all accounts, seem to have been honest enough fellows, skilled in sleights and various essentials of the magical business, yet making no claims to supernatural powers. They were entertainers, professional tricksters, and asked nothing except just payment for their public services. But for so long had the people come to regard trickery as a manifestation of supernatural power, that many of these professional conjurers were themselves said to be genuine disciples of the occult.

It is doubtful, indeed, if the existence of the conjurers would have been tolerated by the priests but for the growing power of Christianity. The swiftly increasing strength of the Christian church was like a dry rot in the roots of the tree of paganism. Priests no longer possessed the prestige of yore; they found themselves doubted, and sometimes derided, by their erstwhile followers. Magistrates, sent out by tolerant emperors, refused to persecute the Christian proselytes as the priests required. And then, when the new religion was finally embraced by the Roman Empire, the overthrow of paganism was complete. Temples fell into disuse and decay; and many of the pagan priests, in order to earn a livelihood, were forced to join the ranks of the very conjurers they had once sought to destroy.

We are not furnished with any exact details concerning the tricks and the *modi operandi* of the Roman conjurers. At times they appear distinct from the jugglers. Athenæus, for

instance, speaks of conjurers and jugglers as two distinct types of entertainers. Pliny groups them as a single type. But both are agreed on the amazing popularity of magic.

One point concerning the Roman magicians is of especial interest. Some of these men were known as *acetubalarii* or "cupsters". This was because one of their favourite tricks was the cups and ball, which was of the same order as the pea and walnut shells swindle which is still worked successfully to-day on our race-courses. Other effects were closely allied to the "miracles" of the temple, such as the calling up of mysterious fires from the ground or vases, and extinguishing them merely by word of command. Such tricks as these would seem to indicate some knowledge of chemical reactions. One conjurer there was who appeared to vomit different kinds of wine, milk and water, as his audience directed. We are not told precisely how the effect was obtained, but we know that the liquids were carried in vessels carried at the conjurer's waist and concealed beneath his *toga*. This trick would seem to be the direct ancestor of David Devant's Magic Kettle.

There are no certain records of magicians having existed in Western Europe at this time. The uncivilized state of Gaul, Germany, Spain and Britain would not, indeed, have permitted of magicians in the sense that the Romans now understood them. There may have been "medicine men" to the various semi-barbaric tribes that then populated the European plains. That there were religious leaders of some sort is tolerably certain. But whether they possessed or even exercised magical powers as had the priests of Egypt, Babylon and Rome, it is not possible to say.

Of Chinese magic in ancient times we know but little. Certain it is that western magic owed nothing to it. Conjurers of sorts certainly existed at the courts of the Chinese Emperors in very ancient times, but there are only scanty references to them in contemporary manuscripts. Most of them seem to have been jugglers. It is possible that anyone pretending to a knowledge of real magic would have been suppressed as challenging the supremacy of the Emperor, who was held to be infallible. Wrestling and sword sports constituted the

greater part of the entertainments of the Chinese courts; and for this, if for no other reason, magic must have been of but very slight importance in the lives of the Chinese people.

The spreading of the Roman legions through Europe undoubtedly assisted in spreading the knowledge of conjuring through Europe. The existence of the old cups and ball trick alone testifies to that. But many years were to pass before these seeds of magical interest took root, and led to an established line of entertainers similar to the Roman conjurers. For the Western peoples were steeped in ignorance and fierce in their adulation of savage gods. They held firm belief in the evil powers of darkness; "black magic" flourished. In such an atmosphere of superstitious awe and dread, simple conjuring could hardly hope to make quick headway. Even the spread of Christianity could not stamp out the traditional beliefs in the affrighting powers of demons, goblins, witches, and similar supernatural beings. Indeed, to some extent, it may be said that early Christian teaching, in that it emphasized the horror of Satan and his evil designs on mankind, tended only to make more certain the popular convictions in the powers of darkness. As late as the eighteenth century so-called "witches" were put to death in Great Britain; and even in the nineteenth century similar unfortunate individuals were subjected to various mild forms of torture under the name of exorcism.



## CHAPTER II

### THE HISTORY OF MAGIC

#### MEDIEVAL MAGIC

FOR the convenience of the reader, I have thought it best to divide this short history of magic into three parts: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Magic. In point of fact, however, such divisions are scarcely justified. True, there is in my opinion, substantial reason for the dividing line I have set between the last two sections, but I am well aware that there may be some well-qualified opinions in disagreement with me. As for the border line between Ancient and Medieval Magic, I must confess myself at a loss to know where it might be most fairly set.

The truth is as I have stated at the conclusion of the last chapter. It is difficult indeed to say at what period magic proper emerged from that dread superstition of sorcery which for so long bewildered the peoples of Western Europe. It was due to the awe with which dabblers in magic powers were generally regarded that the first professional prestigiteurs arose. A man who could guarantee to weave a lucky charm or concoct a love potion, and reinforce his claims by slick feats of *legerdemain*, could reckon on a fairly substantial (if somewhat erratic) income. It is no exaggeration to say that the first conjurers in Great Britain, at any rate, were adventurers pure and simple, who traded on the ignorance and superstition of the populace.

Theirs at first was almost entirely an art of sleights. They travelled the country with their simple paraphernalia (consisting of coins, balls, sticks coloured in the appearance of a wand, and pieces of string) carried in a large black bag, which during their performances was slung conveniently from the waist.

They were adept at "patter", as becomes a nomadic entertainer, and frequented market-places and fair grounds. Often, to create an impression of sorcery, they wore long black cloaks and hoods, or black masks, and the more enterprising kindled fires in the traditional style of wizards.

It was probably this last habit which inspired some unknown genius to use smoke as a screen on which to project images from a concealed lantern. The Greeks and Romans, of course, had already done this, but it is certain that the idea, if ever known in Britain, was never fully understood. Otherwise it would have been utilized much earlier than it was. There is a reference in one of Chaucer's works to this idea of smoke screening projected images, but unfortunately there is no clue to the method that was used. Most probably it was effected by a mirror or some similar reflecting surface, throwing an image through a lens. The science of optics was grasped and utilized by magicians at a very early date; and it is noteworthy that mirrors and plate-glass continue to play a valuable part in certain stage illusions of to-day. The mysterious floating effect known to our grandfathers as Pepper's Ghost was a utilization of this same principle.

No outstanding name has come down to us from those early necromancers. By the ignorant people they were regarded as disciples of the devil, and by the more enlightened as thoroughgoing rascals, which they were. For all that, modern magic owes them a good deal. They devised and perfected many ingenious sleights which are still used by modern conjurers. They were magical artists, and from their experience must have gained a considerable knowledge of the psychological reactions of an audience. Chaucer tells us that the smoke screen illusion was often performed at feasts; and here, practically for the first time, we are given the knowledge that the vagabond conjurer was improving his lot. A vagabond he continued to be long after Chaucer's time, but he was an ingenious one. And his ingenuity was bringing its reward.

Not, of course, that the itinerant performer ceased to exist. He exists to this day (albeit more worthy of intention than his

predecessor) as a visit to any country fair-ground will testify. But the whole point was that some of these performers were deemed worthy of audiences of superior intelligence. It was the first step towards some sort of social recognition. And to me, it is a whimsical reflection that it is only within my own time that at long last the professional magician established himself as a man of decent social status.

A very rare magical book, Scott's "Discoverie of Witchcraft", gives us some full and interesting details of the feats of magic performed by the conjurers of the sixteenth century. For the most part they are simple sleights simply performed. They certainly would not satisfy a modern audience. Yet I am bound to say that any modern conjurer possessed of the same degree of skill would have it in him to give a very polished and satisfying performance. The essential difference between modern and this old-time conjuring is to be found in the single word "showmanship". The technique of *presentation* was no part of the stock-in-trade of the nomadic performers. Thus we find their programmes consisting for the most part of elementary sleights, which the modern conjurer would use, not as tricks in themselves, but as a basis for more spectacular effect. They disappeared coins, and found them in a box previously shown empty, or in the pockets of a spectator. They destroyed and restored playing cards. They cut a length of string and made it whole again; swallowed indiarubber balls; thrust knives into their cheeks, or into the cheeks of a confederate; and produced yards of coloured ribbon from a mouth previously shown empty. The cups and ball effect, and the decapitation trick, were also largely used by them.

These effects in the course of time were gradually elaborated and improved upon as the intelligence of the populace improved. Yet magical progress amongst these strolling conjurers was of necessity very slow. The majority of them travelled between the fair-grounds by foot, and could not be hampered by heavy and unwieldy apparatus. It is to the illusionists, those more enterprising conjurers who had broken away from the open-air performance, that we must

look for real evolution not only in the social status of the professional magician, but in the most important art of showmanship.

For a considerable time, we find that the age-old idea of projecting images on to a smoke screen was the only real illusion in use. This was popular for a number of reasons. In the first place, the conjuring up of "spirits" never failed to fascinate the populace, as it does even now. Secondly, it was an illusion that was admirably suited to the convenience of the conjurer. To make the images disappear it was only necessary to damp down his smoke. By this means transparent visions were obtained in staccato puffs of smoke, something in the style of the appearance of the Demon King in the modern pantomime. It was an illusion that was easily worked, yet not easily detected, for the room in which the performance took place was necessarily darkened. Then again, the illusion could be continued so long as the audience desired. It was limited only by the number of images which the magician had prepared and the nerves of the onlookers.

It is held by some that the smoke screening of images could not have occurred before the invention of the magic lantern, towards the latter half of the seventeenth century. This is quite erroneous since there is definite historical evidence of the illusion being frequently used much before that time. Mirrors and lenses were most certainly used to obtain the required effect; and in all probability a very rudimentary form of projecting lamp, utilizing the magic lantern principle. The images must have been dim and flickering, but what they lacked in clearness was more than compensated by the excited imaginations of the audiences. When the magic lantern proper was perfected, it was utilized to a very considerable extent by magicians. This point is not without its interest, for it was the magician, Carl Hertz, who did much to popularize the magic lantern's natural successor, the cinema, more than a hundred and fifty years later.

But for all their acknowledged skill, and their undoubted force as entertainers, conjurers and illusionists alike were still regarded outside their work with disfavour. Certainly their

acquaintanceship was not cultivated by people of breeding. We have to wait until the eighteenth century before any alteration in this outlook is noticeable. In that eventful half-century between 1750 and the beginning of the nineteenth century, magic prospered as it had never done before. Intelligent men of good society turned to magic for a living. They invested, improved on the elementary effects of their predecessors, and acquired considerable talent in the business of showmanship. And there were two personalities above all others which we must remark for their furtherance of the magical cause. They were Joseph Balsamo and the Chevalier Pinetti.

There is no space here to consider in detail the amazing life of Balsamo, the self-styled Conte di Cagliostro. That he was a charlatan is beyond all argument, but to what extent he duped his many thousands of followers we shall probably never know. Beneath the contemptible swagger which carried him for years through the aristocracies of Europe, there was a curious strain of gentleness. He gave away a good deal of his money to the poor, and dispensed them medicines free of charge. Unscrupulous as were his methods of making money, there is little doubt that he has come down to us a much-maligned man. There are some historians who still insist that he was guiltily involved in the theft of the du Barry necklace. Yet the trial proved him to be completely innocent, the unsuspecting victim of a woman's fear and jealousy. That Cagliostro chose the occasion to make a lengthy self-appraising speech (which was mostly lies) to his judges can hardly affect the question of his culpability.

It was by posing as a master of occult science that Cagliostro derived his enormous income. A man of dynamic personality, with a very great gift of eloquence, he drew thousands of people, including some of the richest and most powerful nobles in Europe, to his feet by his absurd promises of elixirs which would prolong life, restore youth to old age, and beauty to the disfigured. He appointed himself Master of an Egyptian Lodge in masonry—"the only true masonry"—and his beautiful wife became Mistress of a Women's Lodge. He conducted "séances", conjuring up spirits of the dead (often himself in

disguise). He appointed children of "virgin innocence" for his "mediums", and these unfortunate little creatures told the hushed audiences of the visions which they saw in bowls of water. He had a considerable knowledge of chemistry and medicine, though he was qualified in neither science.

It is not as an illusionist that Cagliostro is important to the history of magic, but as a *personality*. Just as there were thousands who believed him possessed of genuine powers in the occult, there were thousands who knew him for the charlatan that he was. Yet these were drawn to his "séances" not through the force of his magic, but by the amazing personality and audacious ingenuity of the man. In short, Cagliostro was a super showman; and it was his showmanship alone which focused the attention of all Europe on the subject of magic.

The Chevalier Pinetti was far more skilled in the art of magic than his famous contemporary. He was an illusionist of a very high order, and a magical inventor of no mean ability. He travelled the theatres of Germany, France and Italy, and amongst his patrons were kings and queens, and the cream of society. He was an adept at sleights, and possessed of a very wide repertoire of magical effects.

Splendid showman though Pinetti was, he lacked something of Cagliostro's fire. But the real essential difference between them was that Cagliostro was a fraud, Pinetti was not. True, in his performance of "second sight" which he conducted with his wife, Pinetti lay claim to genuine powers. But it is doubtful, indeed, if he expected his words to be taken seriously. His results were too obviously "magical" to be mistaken for anything but trickery.

It is a sad reflection that Cagliostro, after living through years of triumph and wealth, should end his days in the most abject misery. Cagliostro was probably starved to death (by the order of Pope Pius VI) in an underground dungeon of the Fortress of San Leon. Pinetti died, forgotten, in a remote Russian village.

### CHAPTER III

## THE HISTORY OF MAGIC

### MODERN MAGIC

MODERN magic may be said to be divided into two main sections; conjuring proper—that is to say effects obtained by sleight of hand; and illusions, which are worked mainly on mechanical principles. It is through illusion that magic has progressed; nearly all the great magicians of the past fifty years have been illusionists. The reason of this must be obvious to any student of magic. Illusions have a very wide appeal; they are more spectacular and offer better opportunity for showmanship than pure *legerdemain*. Again in a large theatre, and before a large audience (which, of course, implies better remuneration for the performer), they can be shown to the very best advantage, whilst *legerdemain*, to be properly appreciated, often necessitates working at close quarters, and consequently before a small audience.

It is far from me to disparage the art of conjuring. Without it, magic could not exist. Nearly all the great illusionists of the world have graduated through conjuring, and sleight of hand is often used in the working of a stage illusion. One of the greatest magical artists of all time, Arnold de Biere, after performing illusions for a number of years, has returned to sleight of hand effects. T. Nelson Downs, the American, built his world reputation on his delightful coin manipulation, "The Miser's Dream". Horace Goldin is a past master in sleights. But my point is that magic as the modern public know it, and appreciate it best, is a business of illusions. It is the stage illusion, rather than the art of the drawing-room conjurer, which has brought magic to the fore.

We have already called attention to the Chevalier Pinetti,

one of the first men to draw considerable audiences to witness his stage illusions. But although Pinetti seemed to strike a new line in magic, many of his illusions were in reality only elaborations of sleight of hand effects. He had hit on a splendid idea in presenting them in a *big* way; but although magic owes him much, it must be said that he was not an illusionist in the strictest sense. It is fair to describe him as a first-rate conjurer working in the *style* of an illusionist.

Jean Eugene Robert Houdin, a Frenchman, was the man who, all unconsciously, laid the basis of a new technique in magic. Naturally enough, that technique has undergone some alteration since Houdin was in his prime nearly a century ago, but the broad lines which he established are still observed by modern performers. In a scurrilous book, my friend Harry Houdini sought to ridicule the good work that Houdin had done, but not without reason has the great Frenchman been called "The Father of Modern Magic".

It is not possible here to deal in detail with Houdin's life history. Those who are interested can find the whole romantic story admirably set out in the magician's autobiography. Like his father, he was a watchmaker, and thus, in his very early years, gained a sound knowledge of mechanical principles. He was extremely skilled in sleights, and it was due to the interest of a chance acquaintance, the Conte de l'Escalopier, that he was enabled to give a number of private magical performances. He turned his attention to invention, and before very long perfected a number of truly remarkable illusions. At length, he decided to become a professional magician; and it was obvious from the start that he intended to terminate the old tradition in magic. His illusions were entirely new, and there was a startling simplicity about his apparatus. His table, in reality a miracle of traps and servantes and pulleys, had the appearance of an ordinary piece of furniture, and made the trap tables of his contemporaries seem suspiciously unwieldy in comparison. In addition, Houdin was the first magician to perform in evening dress clothes. At a time when the majority of conjurers affected flowing

robes or exaggerated fancy costume, this was a revolution in itself.

He built for his own exclusive use a small theatre in the Rue de Valois in the Palais Royal district of Paris. His first public performance there created a sensation, and he found himself inundated with requests to perform at private *soirées* in some of the best Parisian houses. Yet he was not content to rest on his laurels. He continued to devise some extraordinary fine illusions which not only delighted his enthusiastic audiences, but bewildered his brother magicians as well. He studied, and eventually applied, electricity as a motive power in his illusions; and as if to prove that, in spite of his artistry, magic was not his only interest, he invented an electric clock, a device for catching burglars, and a few small surgical instruments.

Houdin died in 1871, but there were others to carry on the new tradition he had started. Notable amongst these were Anderson the Great, a very gifted Scotchman, and Hertz, whose splendid act, "The Devil of a Hat," brought its originator a fortune.

Neither Anderson nor Hertz were comparable with Houdin for pure magical artistry. But both were men of infinite ingenuity. Anderson was a first-rate showman, and it was his showmanship which really made him famous. Most magicians of his day used foreign names. Anderson used his own name, and dressed his daughters, who acted as his assistants on the stage, in kilts. Most of his illusions were entirely mechanical in operation, and of a highly spectacular order. I believe Anderson was the first magician to hire a theatre for his own exclusive use for a set season.

Hertz in his early days was a failure as a magician. He was astute enough to realize that he would continue a nonentity to the end of his days unless he devised a programme that was "different". Thus was born "The Devil of a Hat". In this Hertz appeared on a perfectly bare stage with a tall hat, apparently empty. From this hat he produced a seemingly unending stream of articles, silks, ribbons, flowers and so on. This was achieved by very skilled re-loading from his body.

Presently the stage was filled, and the concluding item is worth mentioning if only to testify to Hertz's powers of showmanship. From a huge tangled bundle of ribbons, he produced a large glass globe in which live goldfish were swimming. The impression left on the audience was that this, too, had come from the hat. In reality, it was ingeniously hidden in his clothes, and only slipped beneath the ribbons at the last moment.

Incidentally, Hertz invented a clockwork pack of cards, in which selected cards rose of their own accord, even when held by a spectator. This effect, in almost its original form, is still used by modern magicians.

Contemporary with, and subsequent to, Anderson and Hertz, was a considerable number of very poor magical performers, more copyists than magicians. Through their existence, magic suffered something of a setback. They adopted the tricks of the best-known magicians of the day, and ran them to a set programme, almost as if they had been turned out from a factory. They used attractive stage names; I can recall such as Dr. Lynn, Dr. Holden, Dr. Nix, Colonel Stoldare, and Lieutenant Albini.

It was left to De Kolta and Carl Hertz to start the great revival in magic. De Kolta was perhaps a little old-fashioned in his style of presentation, even for his day, but he was a magical inventor of real genius. Hertz was not an inventor in any sense of the word, but his showmanship was splendid, and his flair for publicity and business acumen forced him to the forefront of the profession. A little later Maskelyne came along, and drew all London to the Egyptian Hall with his showmanship and bewildering mechanical illusions. As a result of the impetus thus set going, many magicians arose. The music-halls boomed; and no magician worthy of the name was ever out of employment. In London alone there were two hundred music-halls drawing crowded houses, with magicians almost invariably topping the bill. The six hundred provincial halls played to similar flourishing business.

This was the real Golden Age of Magic. In addition to the three I have mentioned there were such men as Charles Morritt, Devant, De Cone, and Servais le Roy. A little later

came Nelson Downs, Goldin, Chung Ling Soo, Houdini and Lafayette. For nearly twenty years magic was the real thing that mattered in the world of entertainment. Agents and music-hall managers talked and thought in terms of magic, and it was no uncommon occurrence for magic to occupy as much as two-thirds of a music-hall programme.

But during the past twenty years, magic has suffered a good deal, and from two distinct causes. The first of these was the Great War, which turned the world, and people's ideas, topsy-turvy. The demand in entertainment, after the war, was for noise and excitement. Those magicians who were able to adapt their programmes to meet the new condition did well, but they could not re-establish magic in all its old prestige. Then, in more recent times, came talking pictures. These did not strike directly at magic, but at its mainstay—the music-hall. With the conversion of many music-halls into "luxury" cinemas, the plight of the professional magician became increasingly serious.

Writing now in the summer of 1933, it seems to me that the pendulum is gradually swinging back. The demand for magicians, both on the remaining music-halls and at concerts and drawing-room entertainments, is much greater than it was eighteen months ago. And, strange as it may seem, during the entire period of magical depression, magical inventors have not ceased to invent. It is my opinion that there are more ingenious illusions in service to-day than ever there were.

Great magicians, of course, still exist. They are arising even now; and they will be born of the generations to come. The trouble now is that they must fight with twice the energy and courage of their predecessors to obtain recognition. Take the case of Cardini, the Welshman. Unable to establish himself in this country, he went first to Australia, and then to America. His sleights with cards, cigarettes, and billiard balls are marvellous; and American magicians spoke of him as one of the greatest magicians who had ever visited that country. He is now generally acknowledged as the greatest sleight of hand expert of the twentieth century; but it was only

determination and sheer hard work that brought this recognition to Cardini.

Men like Horace Goldin, De Biere and Chefalo continue to flourish; and there are dozens of lesser-known men who are making considerable livings from magic. It is through their efforts and enthusiasm that, in spite of economic hindrances and set-backs, magic as an art continues to thrive.

#### A DEFENCE OF CONDUCT

I shall be forgiven, I hope, for interposing here a few words in defence of a certain aspect of my magical activities. Readers of this and other of my magical works will know that I have made it my business to indulge in what the popular press has been pleased to describe as "magical exposures". In other words, I have been pleased to "give away" the secrets of tricks and illusions, to draw aside the curtain of mystery which veils the best effects of many of the world's greatest magical performers.

I am by no means the first magician to have done this, and, indeed, it was due to the example of the immortal Hoffmann that I eventually decided to devote myself to *exposés*. It is worth while telling in brief the story of Hoffmann's work in this direction, and the motives which impelled him to make a life work of magical revelations.

Forty years ago the profession of magic was in anything but a flourishing condition. With a very few notable exceptions, magicians were a poor lot, copying and stealing the effects of the more successful performers of the day, even to the patter that was used. With the spark of originality thus lacking, it was inevitable that magic suffered. The sameness of the programmes, of the appearance and methods of presentation of the performers, and even of the high-sounding stage titles then in vogue, sickened the public. It was only owing to the efforts of such as De Kolta Hertz and J. N. Maskelyne that magic was saved from the contempt with which it had been gradually received up to the middle of the eighteenth century.

Professor Hoffmann, a barrister-at-law, and a very skilled amateur magician, was the first to perceive that magic was slowly degenerating. What is more important, he was the only man to take it to heart. He actually called on the magicians who were performing in London, and begged them, for the sake of their profession, to change their programmes, and to strike some original lines in illusions and general presentation. He was received with such indifference that he declared he would force their hands by publicly exposing the secrets of their best illusions.

He obtained a contract for a series of magical *exposés* in *The Boys' Own Paper*. Professor Bland, a well-known magical salesman and inventor, of Oxford Street, London, aided and abetted him. The articles were lucidly written and profusely illustrated, and since they were the first of their kind to be published, they attracted considerable public interest. This was exactly what Hoffmann wanted, and, as he had hoped, they had the effect of causing considerable alterations in the stereotyped programmes that magicians were then presenting. Moreover, a large number of novices were suddenly inspired to obtain proficiency in magic. Professor Bland, who had foreseen this possibility, did splendid business during the publication of the Hoffmann articles.

Thus successfully started in magical writing, it was only natural that Hoffmann should desire to continue. Yet his first consideration was for the welfare of magic, and he had yet to decide whether further *exposés* would not eventually defeat the very purpose he had set himself. It was J. N. Maskelyne, whose enthusiasm for a really sound standard work on magic, finally decided him. Hoffmann immediately set to work on the first of his three famous books—"Modern Magic".

The book had far-reaching effects. Both Houdini and Howard Thurston were first attracted to magic through reading it; and Houdini learnt it practically by heart to gain his knowledge of fundamental magical principles. Its very wide sale stimulated an enormous public interest in magic,

and did a good deal to elevate the profession in the world of entertainment.

My own motive in publishing my first book of magical secrets was to preserve some record of the best illusions of my time for future generations of magicians. Those magicians who take their secrets to the grave are, in my opinion, doing grave disservice to the art which has served them so well. If magic is to thrive and prosper it must have some standards of knowledge to hand down to posterity. I was fired with the ambition that in my own works might be found that necessary standard. One of the proudest moments of my life was when I asked Professor Hoffmann, then a venerable old gentleman in retirement, to write an introduction to my first book of any consequence—"Exclusive Magical Secrets". He warned me then that I should find the business of writing about magic far less paying than actively performing—and how true his words have proved! He told me, too, that if I applied myself wholeheartedly to the business of recording secrets, my services to magic would prove inestimable.

Be that as it may, I can honestly say that I have endeavoured to carry on my work with that same spirit of altruism and that same visionary breadth which inspired Hoffmann in his. It has not been easy. I have been threatened, as Hoffmann was threatened, and on one occasion I barely escaped being manhandled by a crowd of French ruffians who in all probability were the hirelings of some magical colleague. I have been libelled and slandered. And on nearly all of my biggest books, *I have lost money*.

Yet I say a thousand times it has been worth it. I have had the friendship and support of such men as Houdini, Devant, Goldin and Chefalo. For a work I recently undertook Chefalo actually supplied me with the secrets of his best half-dozen illusions. Goldin, too, has always been extremely generous in this respect.

It is gratifying to observe the results of one's labours. John Mulholland, America's finest exponent of sleight of hand, became interested in magic through reading my "Tricks and Illusions". So did Cardini, the Welsh wizard, whom I have



**CARDINI**

the great Welsh sleight-of-hand magician, created an honorary member of the Magicians' Club. President Louis Gautier is seen attaching the Club's jewel to Cardini's lapel



mentioned elsewhere in this volume. Through these two instances alone, I feel that the work of a lifetime has been repaid.

#### MAGIC AND MAGICIANS

Whenever magicians meet together to talk of magic one may be sure that sooner or later someone will refer to the work of John Nevil Maskelyne, the founder of the entertainment which is now being carried on by his grandsons and which—one can say without any exaggeration—is known all over the civilized world.

The question has often been asked among conjurors: Was Maskelyne a genius or was he just very lucky in his choice of magic as a means of livelihood?

Personally—and I had the pleasure of knowing him very well—I should say that Maskelyne was certainly not a genius; to my mind he was a great mechanician and also, in many ways, a very foolish man. He confessed as much to me one day when he told me that he had made two fortunes and spent them.

I did not need to ask how he had run through the money he had made with his entertainment, for it was common knowledge that Maskelyne's little hobby was litigation. I do not think he ever won a case, but he was always eager for the opportunity to win one.

One of his most famous cases had to do with a certain trick box which he used in his entertainment. The box was one of the "props" in a magical sketch, "Will, the Witch, and the Watchman". During the sketch a man was placed in the box after members of the audience had examined it. The box was locked and the key given to a member of the audience who was allowed to remain on the stage during the performance of the sketch; in fact, two visitors had that privilege. After it was locked the box was wrapped in a piece of canvas and sewn up. Finally the box was corded and placed in a cabinet on the stage; the cabinet was raised on four legs and the audience could see under it during the whole of the performance. When the box was taken out of the cabinet

the member of the audience holding the key was called forward. The box was still corded, the canvas still sewn up, and the box was still locked, but when it was unlocked it was seen to be empty.

Maskelyne was in the habit of challenging the world to discover the secret of the box or to make one with which the trick could be done under the conditions which he observed; further, he offered a reward of £500 to anyone who took up the challenge and won it.

One day two young men who had made a box between them came forward and claimed Maskelyne's reward of £500. Maskelyne refused to pay. The case went to the courts and Maskelyne lost. He appealed and lost again. Then he took the case to the House of Lords, and this, I believe, is the only occasion when a dispute over a trick has ever been decided by the Lords. Maskelyne lost. Thereupon he had a fresh challenge drawn up by a lawyer and he doubled the reward, making it £1,000. That challenge was never taken up.

If Maskelyne had had his first challenge worded by a lawyer he would probably not have been troubled by any claimant.

What was the secret of Maskelyne's box? Some little time before his death he discussed the Box Trick Case with me and told me that he would tell me something that even the profession did not know. Then he admitted to me that he had thought he could safely offer a reward of £500 for the discovery of the secret of his box because there was no secret in it; it was just a well-made trunk with holes in it to admit air to the man who worked the trick. How, then, did the man get out of the box?

It must be remembered that the box was put in a cabinet. During the sketch presented on the stage it was a simple matter to hide a man in that cabinet. The doors could be opened and the cabinet appeared to the audience to be empty, but a man was concealed in it. Therefore this man could easily undo the box, unlock it with a duplicate key, and release the man who had been put in it.

It had always suspected that that was the secret of the

Box Trick, but it was not the only one! (I will come to the other presently.) Some little time before his death Maskelyne smashed up the box which had been the subject of all that very expensive litigation. I ask: Is it likely that he would have ruined such a very valuable article if it had been—well, really valuable? At that time he knew that the entertainment would be carried on by his two sons (both of whom have since died) after his death. Why should he deprive his sons of such a very useful “prop” in the show?

Now for the other secret connected with this box. The sketch in which it was used was altered from time to time and, Maskelyne made more than one trick box! One of his boxes was fitted with very clever mechanism. When the box was placed on the stage in the usual position and the lid opened the secret could not be found out.

When the box was stood on one end—and it was always placed in that position in the cabinet—a heavy steel ball rolled down at one end and released a hidden spring which enabled the man inside the box to open a panel at that end and make his escape.

I have good reason for thinking that Maskelyne made another box in which the release was effected by the man inside the box; the man used a special little tool for the purpose.

To prove to legal minds that in judging a trick box one must not go by appearances, Maskelyne bought a little puzzle match-box for a few pence and fitted it with some special “works” of his own invention. He spent three weeks over the job. The little box was then a real puzzle, for no one could open it unless Maskelyne wished them to open it, in the usual way, by pressing the ends. He argued that because the claimants’ box looked something like his box it was not a bit like it really! Still, he lost his case.

Those who knew Maskelyne well knew that though he was not a genius he had some of the eccentricity of a genius.

For example, just before the celebrations of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee someone suggested to Maskelyne that if he wanted to speculate he might put up a stand on a building commanding a good view of the entrance of St. Paul’s Cathe-

dral. Maskelyne's surveyor told him that the roof would not support a stand. Thereupon, without a moment's consideration, Maskelyne decided to buy the building, pull it down, erect a stand, and replace the building!

He went through with this wild-cat scheme and lost thousands over it. Yet he used to tell people that he did not approve of gambling, that he had never had a bet in his life, and had never taken a ticket for a sweepstake!

I have often wondered if Maskelyne would ever have been a public performer if it had not been for a lucky accident. True, as a boy he was fond of conjuring and mechanics; he used to boast that when he was sixteen he could give a very good entertainment with tricks made by himself. But at that time he was apprenticed to a watchmaker and he had no thoughts of turning to magic for a living. Then, one afternoon the Davenport Brothers—a couple of very clever bogus mediums—gave an exhibition of their skill at a hall in Cheltenham, Maskelyne's native town. The hall had been darkened, but at a very important moment in the show a corner of a curtain fell away and Maskelyne was able to get a glimpse of one of the performers. That glimpse was enough! In a very short time Maskelyne, aided by his friend Cooke (for many years the show was known as Maskelyne and Cooke's) was putting on a much better show than the Davenport Brothers had given and had announced that it was all trickery. That was the foundation of the entertainment now known as Maskelyne's.

I have always thought that Maskelyne was just very lucky with his show; in fact, I had his word for it. When he came to London in 1873 he had no idea of staying in London. He thought that if he could manage to scrape through a short season he would then be able to return to his provincial tours with the attraction of "From the London principal halls" to put on his programmes and posters. With the exception of one or two tours in the provinces he stayed in London for the rest of his life, and he was lucky all the time.

By taking the old Egyptian Hall (long since pulled down) and letting out the ground floor to shops, his show lived almost

rent free in the heart of London. He had practically no competition. He invented the matinee performance and for years his entertainment was the only one in London open in the afternoon. He could not help making money! What a pity that there was not someone to prevent him from wasting it!

When his lease of the Egyptian Hall expired, Maskelyne decided to kick away the ladder by which he had risen to fame. He thought that he could attract a "theatre audience" to his show, so he took St. George's Hall (known as Maskelyne's Theatre), spent money lavishly on improvements, and put on a play "with magical effects" and engaged well-known actors and actresses to appear in it. He lost quite a lot of money over that venture, and eventually had to return to the entertainment which his patrons expected from him. In doing this he took in as partner a very famous magician, David Devant, and as "Maskelyne and Devant's" the show prospered again.

Maskelyne was always clever with his engagement of other magicians, for he certainly knew a good one when he saw his show. For some time at the old Egyptian Hall the principal attraction was really the conjuring of Buatier de Kolta, whose illusion of the Vanishing Lady became famous all over the world.

Yet it was really a very simple illusion. A lady sat on a chair which was placed on a carpet in the centre of the stage. The performer threw a large sheet over the lady, and for a few moments she was completely hidden. Then the performer snatched the sheet away. The chair was empty!

The seat of the chair was hinged at the back. The carpet had a trap neatly cut in it. The sheet thrown over the lady was really double, and it contained a wire frame to give the audience the impression that the lady was still in the chair, when, as a matter of fact, she had released the seat in the chair and had descended through the trap in the stage. I doubt very much if the illusion, presented in the original way, would deceive a schoolboy nowadays.

Maskelyne was a "strange mixture" as a showman. He

was the first magician to use a "double" in his show; indeed, he invented that idea. There was a "double" in his famous sketch of "Will, the Witch, and the Watchman". At one time during the sketch the "double" wore the dress of a monkey. One afternoon the member of the audience who had been allowed to come up on the stage secretly put a gummed label on the back of the monkey. When the monkey disappeared for a moment and returned, the man noticed that the label was not in its place! And he didn't forget to tell some of his friends afterwards!

Maskelyne might have made a third fortune with the "pictures", but when they were first introduced he prophesied that they would only be a nine days' wonder! It was not until Mr. Devant bought a machine and practically made Maskelyne give him an engagement with it that the pictures were shown at the Egyptian Hall (Mr. Devant was appearing there in the entertainment, but was not a partner in the business).

Maskelyne had a good eye for the value of publicity, and I imagine that his campaign against bogus mediums was conducted partly for the splendid advertisement that such work obtained for him. He once admitted to me that on one occasion—only one—he had nearly been "done" by a medium.

A séance was arranged in a bare room, and the medium had asked Maskelyne to come alone. Having examined the room and sealed the windows, door, etc., Maskelyne sat on one side of a table in the centre of the room, and the medium sat on the other. A musical box, a tambourine and a bell were placed on the floor. The medium placed his toes on Mr. Maskelyne's toes, asked Maskelyne to stretch out his arms. The medium then laid his hands on Maskelyne's arms. Being appealed to, Maskelyne agreed that if the medium moved he would know it. And under those conditions the musical box played, the bell was rung, and the tambourine shaken.

How was it done? The medium lifted one hand at the last moment, with the consent of Maskelyne, in order to turn out the gas. The medium apparently put his hand back on Maskelyne's arm. Maskelyne told me that when he heard

the musical box playing he was done for a second. Then he shook his arm, and a neatly-made "hand" in lead fell from it. The medium had done his little trick when he had reached up to turn out the gas.

Maskelyne was very fortunate in having a brilliantly clever assistant in his elder son—Nevil Maskelyne, a charming man. Many of the illusions which were accredited by the public to the father were really the inventions of the son, who, curiously enough, was not greatly interested in magic. He knew it all, of course, from A to Z, but I imagine that towards the end of his life he had tired of it. Still, father and son working together were a very powerful combination, for the father—known to everyone behind the scenes as "the Old Man"—was a very clever mechanic. He made the secret parts of all his illusions himself, with his own hands, and he used to boast that he could work accurately in metal or wood up to the hundredth part of an inch. To an admirer in America who begged for one of his old magic wands as a memento Maskelyne sent an old file with an autograph letter. He said that he had never used a magic wand in his life; he had found the little thing he was sending so much more useful.

Maskelyne and his son between them brought out the first visible-writing typewriter in the world, but it was not a commercial success. They also invented various patent locks and other devices. It always seemed to me that whenever they strayed away from the work which had made the name of Maskelyne famous all over the world, Fate tapped them on the shoulder and beckoned them to return to magic.



## CHAPTER IV

### SOME SPECIMENS OF MODERN MAGIC

**I**N this book it is my purpose to reveal to you the secrets of the many illusions which I have performed or encountered during my career as a magician.

Although there are thousands of tricks in existence, it has been truly said that all of them are based on not more than six principles. Even the professional illusionist can be deceived by a trick which presents an old principle in a new form. Then differences in the appearance of an illusion are caused by the way in which it is presented. If a magician adds something of his own to a trick he may impart a new character to it. I know of many illusions which, if they were performed rapidly, would seem entirely different from what they would if they were presented at a slow speed.

In this and the following articles I shall deal with a great variety of illusions and tricks, some of them of a spectacular kind, others simpler and more intimate.

Most members of the public imagine, quite erroneously, that the principle behind all tricks and illusions is an absurdly simple one. Although this is true of much that is excellent in magic, it does not apply to some of the best and most famous of illusions. In fact, in some cases, a number of principles are involved. I mean that if you, as a member of an audience watching an illusion, think you can discover the secret at one stroke, as it were, you will be wrong. An illusion is like a detective story: its solution lies in a number of facts which, put together, make the whole.

Personally, I prefer the kind of trick which is complicated and contains several different secrets, but perhaps my preference is due to the fact that I like to bewilder my brother magicians. It is not easy to do this with a trick containing

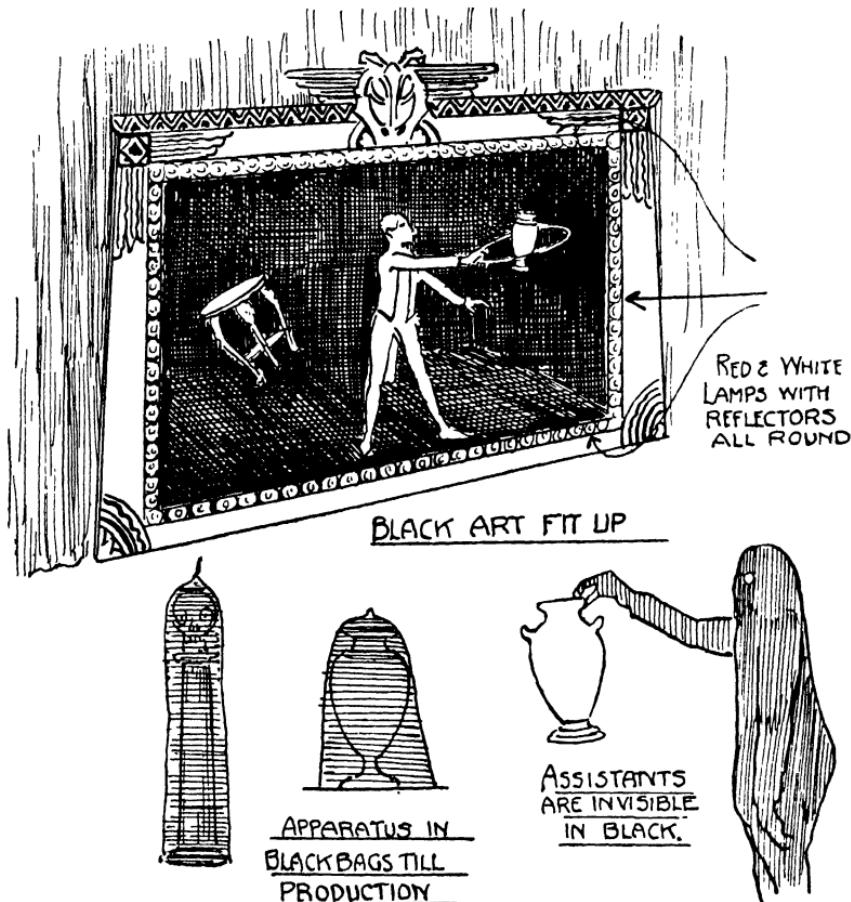
only one utterly simple principle, however cleverly it may be presented.

Yet some years ago I deceived thousands of members of the public with an illusion the idea behind which— Well, just let me tell you all about it.

The illusion was known as the "Black Art", and as the curtain went up I was seen by the audience standing on the stage. Behind me there was a smaller stage on which the actual mystery was performed. On the smaller stage there was some furniture; in fact, it looked just like an ordinary room except that the furniture was painted white and that the walls and other parts of the room were heavily draped in black velvet, the latter part of the decoration being a most expensive item for me. When the lights were switched off, the audience could see distinctly the white table, chairs and other articles of furniture standing out clearly in the darkness because of the white paint.

The first mysterious occurrence was the floating through the air of a white magic wand which glided into my hand from the "haunted room". Many a time I have heard women give little shrieks when this, the first of the "manifestations", occurred, but what they say afterwards was even more astonishing. The table would slowly rise from the floor and float about the room, the chairs following its example. The effect produced was really uncanny. There seemed to be no explanation of the curious gliding movements of the furniture, which would sometimes also stop suspended in mid-air. The audience had been convinced by me that no wires were used. As proof of the fact that wires did not figure in the mystery I would turn my wand or hook close to the moving article of furniture; but, apart from that proof, the audience must have been able to see for themselves from the way in which the furniture moved that wires could not be responsible, nor was there any mechanical force or impulse behind the "manifestations".

What, then, was the secret? Simply this. The furniture was moved by one of my assistants who was dressed entirely in black from head to foot, with his face covered by a black



mask. In this attire my man could walk about the stage completely unseen by the audience, the background of black velvet making him invisible.

That is an astonishingly simple secret, but, as you will imagine, the illusion was surprisingly effective.

I remember an amusing experience connected with the "Black Art". I was touring in the North at the time, when one afternoon I was told that someone wished to see me at the stage door. There I met a man who spoke with a strong Scottish accent. He told me he was a Glasgow merchant who was interested in amateur theatricals and illusions. He told me he had seen my performance of the "Black Art" at the theatre on the previous night and had been unable to sleep, so hard had he tried to think out the secret. The Scotsman asked if I were prepared to sell the secret of the trick to give him the right to perform it amongst his friends. I said I was prepared to do this, and that the price would be £250 in cash. The stranger seemed a little taken aback at the price I asked, but, after thinking for a few moments, said he would pay it.

"I will come back to the theatre in an hour with the money," he said, and departed. I smiled, because I did not expect to see him again. But, sure enough, he turned up an hour later and was shown into my dressing-room, and he laid the money on my table. "There you are," he said. "Now what is the secret?" Deliberately and carefully I counted the money and then placed it in my desk which I locked. "Just a moment," I smiled; "there is plenty of time and not much to tell."

No portrait painter, however skilled, could have captured the strange expressions which flitted over the stranger's face. He did not say a word but flopped down on a chair, open-mouthed and completely dismayed at the ridiculous simplicity of the explanation. The first thing he did when he recovered himself was to demand his money back, but I did not see eye to eye with him in this. He offered to pay me for the secret of the famous illusion; I had accepted the offer and fulfilled my part of the bargain. I saw no reason why he should have

A lithograph of the author performing the Black Art illusions under his professional name of Carl Devol, Year 1907





for nothing something he, a rich man, desired so strongly to possess—the secret of the “Black Art”.

Whether the Scotsman ever deceived his Glasgow friends by performing the illusion to them I do not know. Being a Scotsman, he might have sold the secret to somebody else for £300! If he did present the illusion it must have cost him a pretty penny, for, as I have already said, the price of black velvet is high. Probably he would use velveteen—a cheap imitation!

One never sees the “Black Art” performed in these days. The last time I performed it was during one of those wonderful magical parties given at the Chelsea house of the President of the Magicians’ Club, Mr. Louis Gautier. Attached to the house is a studio which Mr. Gautier converted into an amateur theatre. After cold chicken and champagne Mr. Gautier would lead his guests, mostly magicians and their wives, where they would see all sorts of tricks. Indeed, many a famous illusion was first seen at one of Gautier’s parties, and many a magician has found a new idea there. One of these parties cost Gautier over £200, the chief item being the purchase of the velvet for the performance of the “Black Art”.

The story of the Scotsman reminds me of an experience which befell my friend, Horace Goldin, perhaps the greatest living illusionist in Germany, some time ago. Goldin was performing his famous illusion, “Sawing a Woman in Half”, at a German provincial music-hall. One night, after the show, a man stopped him as he was leaving the theatre and begged to know the secret of the illusion.

“I saw you performing it three nights ago,” said the man as he clutched Goldin’s sleeve, “and I have not been able to rest or sleep since then. It has got on to my mind. Please do tell me the secret. I promise you on my word of honour that I will not tell anyone else.” Goldin shook his head and told the man that what he asked was impossible, and walked on.

Every night during Goldin’s two weeks’ stay in the town the man accosted him near the theatre and begged to be told the secret. It was obvious to Goldin that the man was not

lying when he said he could get no sleep. His face was haggard, and his eyes were red. One night, towards the end of the fortnight, the man said he would shoot himself if he were not told how the trick was done. Becoming rather alarmed, Goldin saw the manager of the theatre, and, with a feeling of pity for the man, asked permission to reveal the secret. This permission the manager refused to give. The man did not carry out his threat to commit suicide, and later Goldin learned the illusion ceased to be an obsession with him.

Writing of illusions which require darkness or semi-darkness for their effectiveness recalls to my mind the remarkably clever, but simple, piece of deception in which a large coloured ball is used. Its colours are so bright that the ball can easily be seen by the audience, even when the stage is in almost complete darkness. Before the lights are lowered, the magician shows the ball and bounces it, making it clear that there are no mechanics about it and that, in fact, it is just an ordinary ball of rubber. Then, when the lights are dimmed, the audience sees the ball floating slowly over the stage. The magician gives the ball words of command, such as "Rise higher"; "Move to the right"; "To the left"; "Float just in front of my face", and so on. All the orders are carefully obeyed by the ball, which even stops still in the air when commanded to do so. With his wand the magician shows that wires are not being used. Some of you may be thinking that this is another trick based upon the principle of the "Black Art", but this is not the case. No one touches the ball during the trick. There are no wires or mechanical power. How, then, is the ball made to move in the air so mysteriously and apparently without ordinary cause? The answer is that in each of the "wings" there stands a man—one of the magician's assistants. Stretched from one of the "wings" to the other and held by each of the men is a black net, in texture almost exactly like a woman's hair-net, but actually 30 or 40 feet in length, and about 1 foot broad. Because of the lighting, or lack of it, it is impossible for the audience to see the net. It is an easy matter for each man,

holding his net at about the height of his chin, so to manipulate the net as to make the ball obey the commands of the magician. When the trick is over and before the lights go up once more, the net is whisked away.

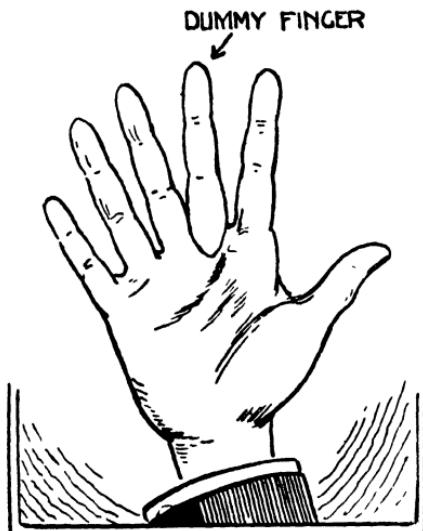
For its neatness and baffling effect I give this trick high marks.

Looking back upon all the tricks I have performed, I recall with a feeling of affection one swift and amusing little deception. I became quite attached to this trick and was sorry when I had to leave it out of my programme. It was, as Joxer would have said, a "darling of a trick". And this is what would happen. Having just finished performing some big illusion, I would stand in the centre of the stage with one of my men assistants. On the stage would appear a second assistant, carrying an oil-lamp of the large, old-fashioned kind on a tray. A folded cloth lay on the tray. While the second assistant held the tray I would unfold the cloth and cover both lamp and tray for two or three seconds. When I pulled the cloth away, the lamp had vanished. When once more I laid the cloth in front of the tray, the lamp, when the cloth was whisked away, would be found in its place once more. Few items in my programme used to appeal more strongly to my audiences than the mystery of what happened to the lamp. The trick intrigued everyone, and I have known even experienced magicians to be deceived by it. The lamp certainly did not leave the stage and could not be concealed in one of our sleeves or in any part of the clothing, as it was far too bulky. The lamp itself contained no trick, and the tray and cloth were quite genuine. Where *did* the lamp go? You will laugh when I tell you.

First I must explain that assistant No. 1, who, as I have said, was standing by my side, had a false arm so arranged as to make it appear that he was holding the lapel of his coat with his left hand in a normal and natural manner. When the tray is covered with the cloth, he simply used his disengaged arm, snatched the lamp from the tray and held it behind his back. The process was reversed when he wanted the lamp to reappear on the tray. The audience never

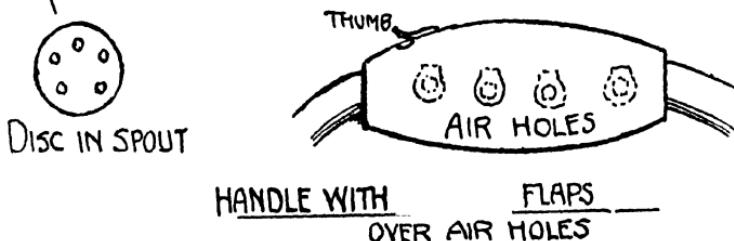
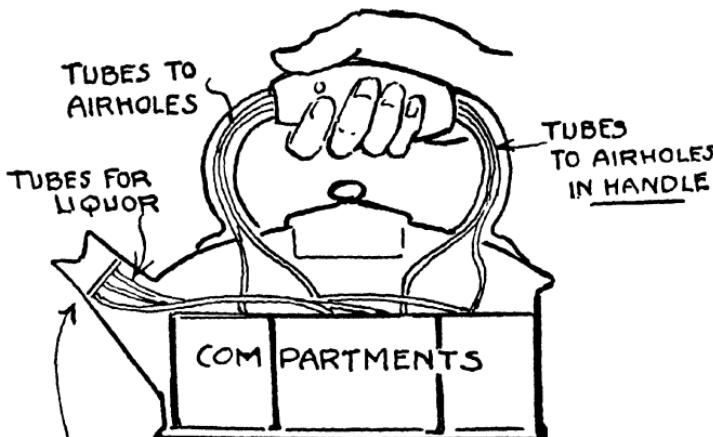
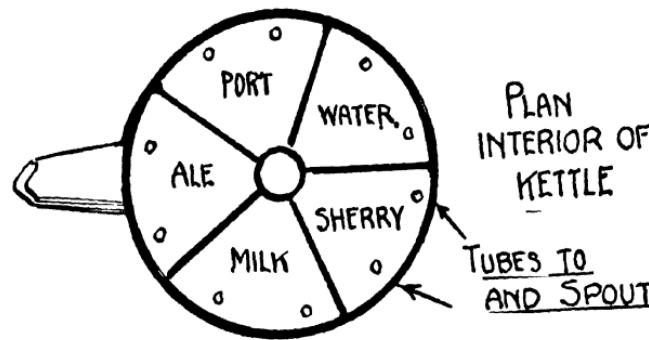
guessed that my assistant had an arm free. As he was wearing evening dress with tails, he had no difficulty not only in using his real arm but in concealing it. By the way, a false arm is sometimes used by pick-pockets. And you can imagine to what good or bad purpose they can use their free arm in a crowd when they are wearing the dummy.

In the same class as a trick is that in which I used a false finger. Now, this finger was specially made to match in size and shape my middle finger, though it was rather shorter and yet a bit longer than the first finger. Therefore, it looked



perfectly natural. The false finger could be attached in a second to the skin of my hand between the two real fingers, and I could detach it just as quickly. As the false finger was hollow, you will easily understand what possibilities it offered for hiding things. With a deft movement I could conceal in the finger a silk handkerchief or anything else of suitable size which I wished quickly to produce or conceal. "But," you will say, "surely members of the audience, and especially the committee on the stage, would immediately notice that you had an extra finger." It is an interesting fact that no one ever observed this. I suppose the reason was that no one ever thought of counting the fingers of my hand, even had they

## MASKELYNE'S MAGIC KETTLE



imagined it possible to wear a false finger in this way. Naturally, I used the finger only for the sort of trick for which it was particularly adapted and in which there would be no need for me specially to show my hands for more than a few seconds. Yet so little do people suspect the likelihood of a false finger being worn, that some famous magicians who have specialized in feats of escape have used such a finger to conceal a small key or other implement required for the escape.

Even the great Maskelyne was once, on his own admission, nearly "caught" by a bogus medium using a false hand during a séance.

It is almost impossible to write about magic without thinking of the name of Maskelyne.

I dare say most of my readers have, at some time or other, seen a performance on the stage with what has become known as the Magic Kettle, which was at one time a popular item at Maskelyne's.

Thanks to the "magical" properties of the kettle, members of the audience could have almost any drink they asked for, although the illusionist was able to achieve a little choice-forcing in this direction.

The main secret, of course, was in the construction of the kettle, which was divided into five compartments, one of which contained water while the others were filled with liquors of various kinds. To give the magician a greater range of drinks which appeared to be coming from the kettle, there were on the table in front of him a number of empty glasses chemically treated so that, when water was poured into them, the liquid would assume this or that colour; but, of course, these drinks were never handed out to the audience, but those which came from the kettle were.

A special funnel which fitted into all the flow-leads or tubes in the spout was used to fill the kettle. The kettle was actually operated by covering or uncovering, with the fingers, air-holes in the handle. In this way the kettle could be made to appear empty and, at will, water or some alcoholic drink could be produced. The magic kettle must stand as one of the best tricks of the last fifty years.

## CHAPTER V

### EASTERN MAGIC

**I**T is a peculiar fact that, although the coloured races are deeply interested in magic, only a few illusions of importance have come from the East.

Frequently there come into my office, near Leicester Square, Indians or Africans visiting this country. Always they want to buy new tricks to take back with them. I will not soon forget the huge African who, with a friend, called on me one day and asked to have demonstrated to him the latest novelties in magic.

I showed him a trick in which the conjurer apparently swallowed one of two wooden balls. He was delighted with this and said he would buy the trick. Under my tuition he began to practise it, but, although he started well, he actually swallowed, or nearly swallowed, one of the balls during the second rehearsal. I was genuinely alarmed and, with the African's friend, punched him hard on the back of the neck. We succeeded in dislodging the ball, but the huge African was in no mood to continue further experiments. In fact, he went—I was almost going to say red in the face—and hurried out.

Another Eastern visitor I had was an African tribal king of some kind. He told me he had been to one of the Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace and said he was anxious to have a crown and one of those large, coloured umbrellas such as are used as an awning for tables at garden parties.

At first I thought he was joking about the crown, but when he produced the sum of money which he said he was prepared to pay for it I undertook to supply the crown—no, it did not contain real jewels: the sum which the African offered was not sufficient for that. I sent the order for the crown to a firm at Birmingham who do work for me. I

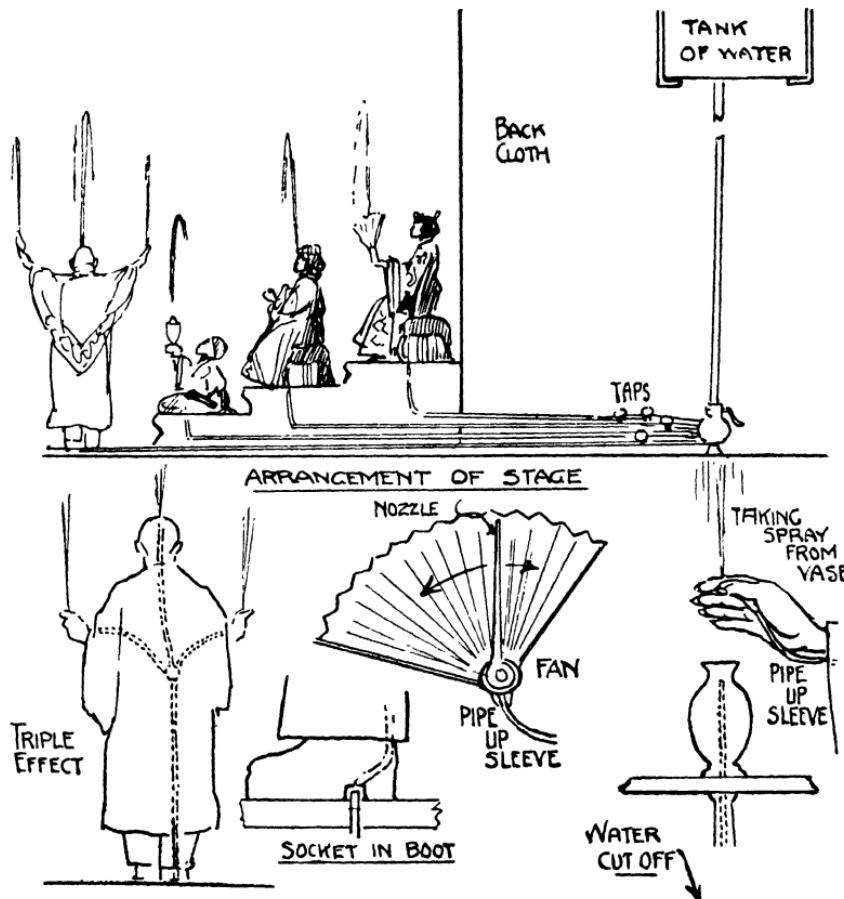
could not help laughing when the crown arrived. It was large and ornate—a real pantomime crown. It was so heavy that I had some difficulty in lifting it. The African was delighted when, in response to a phone call to his hotel, he hurried to my office and saw the crown. I had the large umbrella ready for him too, and he went away a happy man.

Not only Africans and Indians, but the Chinese and Japanese too, take a keen interest in illusions of every kind. Japan has contributed several excellent spectacular effects to the stage of Western magic. One of the best-known of these is the water trick.

The trick has been performed in this country, at various times, for the past twenty-five years or more, and although, therefore, it cannot be called a novelty it always appeals to an average audience.

The effect is simple enough. Three or four performers are seated, at the commencement of the trick, on a raised platform on the stage. The performers, dressed in Chinese or Japanese costumes, are provided with fans. A small vase stands on a little table, while on a larger table there is a bouquet of fresh flowers.

Two of the performers fan themselves, and a small stream of water issues from their fans. Presently one of these "fan fountains" stops, whereupon the other performer appears to toss her "fountain" to the other performer, who immediately shows his (or her) "fan fountain" in working order again. This game of ball played with water is continued for a few moments. Presently one of the performers carries the fountain from the fan to the head of another performer, and the water spouts up from his head. He removes it with his fingers—the water issuing from his hand—and carries it to the empty vase. The audience see the fountain playing from the vase. The performer then puts the fountain back on his head, and removes it with the point of a sword; the water rises up from the sword. The performer carries the sword, with the fountain still playing from the point, to the bouquet of flowers. Finally, the performers return to the raised platform, and fountains play again from the fans.



The trick is neither difficult nor complicated. The water is contained in a tank near the flies (to ensure a good pressure), and it is conveyed to the performers by rubber pipes. The raised platform is close up against the back cloth of the stage, and immediately behind the back cloth are three or more taps, with which the supply of water is regulated by an assistant.

The illustrations show how the water is brought up to an assistant in such a way that she can produce the fountain from her fan. The pipe passes over the back of the chair and down the performer's sleeve to the fan. The stream of water can be directed to any point, the pipe being moved behind the fan. One performer carries three pipes under his robe—one up his back to his wig, and two in his sleeves. The water comes to him through the stage, and he makes the connection between the stage pipe and the one up his back by means of his boot-heel, which is fitted with a socket. The fountain from the empty vase and that from the bouquet of flowers are managed by pipes under the stage.

The trick requires very careful rehearsal, but there is nothing difficult about it, and the spectacle of the fountains, with the limelight playing on them is always very effective.

The Chinese magician is fond of what are called "production" tricks—that is to say, he loves producing flowers, large vases and live animals from unexpected places. The basis of many of these deceptions is that the real hiding-place of the articles produced is underneath the robe of the magician. "But how," you will ask, "is that possible, seeing that the performer must move about the stage? Why do not the articles drop to the floor?" The reason is that the Chinese conjurer wears under his robe a form of harness consisting of a stout leather belt which he fastens round his waist. A strong cord is attached to the centre of the belt; at the other end of the cord is a self-releasing hook. The hook is in the form of a short bar of metal, the hook being at one end and a weight at the other. If the magician hangs a heavy load (one or more articles to be produced magically) to the hook, he can easily carry it under his robe, which, by the way, is

always stiffened with buckram so as to give plenty of room for the carrying of large loads. The load is behind the legs and when the performer stoops slightly, the load is deposited on the stage and, directly this is done, the weight at the other end of the hook drops down and the load is automatically released.

When a Chinese magician wishes suddenly and mysteriously to produce a bowl of water on the stage, he uses a specially made apron worn under his robe. The apron contains one or more pockets, large enough to contain the bowl which is actually produced under cover of the waving of a cloth through an opening in the front of the robe. The same principle is used when a live dog, or other animal, is made to appear. Even a kennel, as well as a dog, provided they are both very small, can be produced in this way. The Chinese magician can go even further than this. He can use the harness arrangement under his robe to conceal a 6ft. pagoda. The pagoda is really collapsible and can be stowed quite comfortably under the robe. The centre pile of the pagoda is telescopic and each section is fitted with an umbrella catch which makes it rigid. Having got the pagoda on to the stage, the performer merely has to pull on a ring at the top, and the trick is done; of course, the pagoda is not exposed until it is finally extended.

Another favourite trick with Chinese magicians is the production of a basket of flowers with a fountain in the centre. In this case the secret is that the basket is hanging on a hook on the back of one of the assistants. This assistant walks up to the magician and hands him a large shawl which is waved about by the illusionist as he produces the basket of flowers. There is a small tank in the centre of the basket and the turning of a tap starts a simple, but ingenious arrangement which causes the water to spray like a fountain.

Just as the Chinese magicians cunningly use their robes to deceive, so the Indian juggler or fakir uses his drum. Indeed the "magic drum" played by the fakirs during their "miracles" is a particularly smart example of the art of misdirection, so essential to conjurers. The Indian juggler

pretends that the beating of the drum is part of the magic process. It is, but not in the sense that he means.

The truth is that in a large number of fakir illusions the drum is used to get rid of some object. In most cases when the drum is placed on the ground by the conjurer the movement conceals a vital part of the trick, the hiding of an article behind the drum—or in some cases in the twisted ropes which hold the top and bottom skins of the drum in their places.

For instance, the drum plays such a part in the fakir trick by means of which a pebble seems to have been turned into a parrot's head or a lizard. The fakir produces, in the first place, a small, white pebble which he shows to be genuine. His hands, too, are carefully shown, and they are empty. Picking up the stone in one fist, the conjurer closes his hand tightly, and then, gradually opening it, shows a small bird's head peeping out. Actually the birds' heads are dummies and the drum is found to be a useful aid in the deception.

A trick which has brought the fakirs much renown as magicians requires the use of a small fragment of pottery which the conjurer gives to a spectator with the request that he should make some pencil mark upon it. Having had no possible chance of seeing what sort of mark was made, the fakir takes back the piece of pottery and throws it into the distance. The spectator is then asked to hold out his hand in the direction in which the pottery was thrown. When the victim a few seconds later looks at his hand, he is astonished to see on his palm the very same mark which he secretly put on the fragment—perhaps a triangle, a diamond-shaped drawing or his own initials.

The secret of this is distinctly simple. When the fakir gives the spectator the fragment and the pencil, which is particularly soft, he moistens the ball of one of his thumbs. When he throws the pottery away he grasps it in such a way that he can press his thumb on the mark. When he asks the spectator to point in the direction where the pottery had disappeared, he takes his victim's hand, apparently to show him in which direction to point. It is then that the fakir is able to press the ball of his thumb on to the palm of the

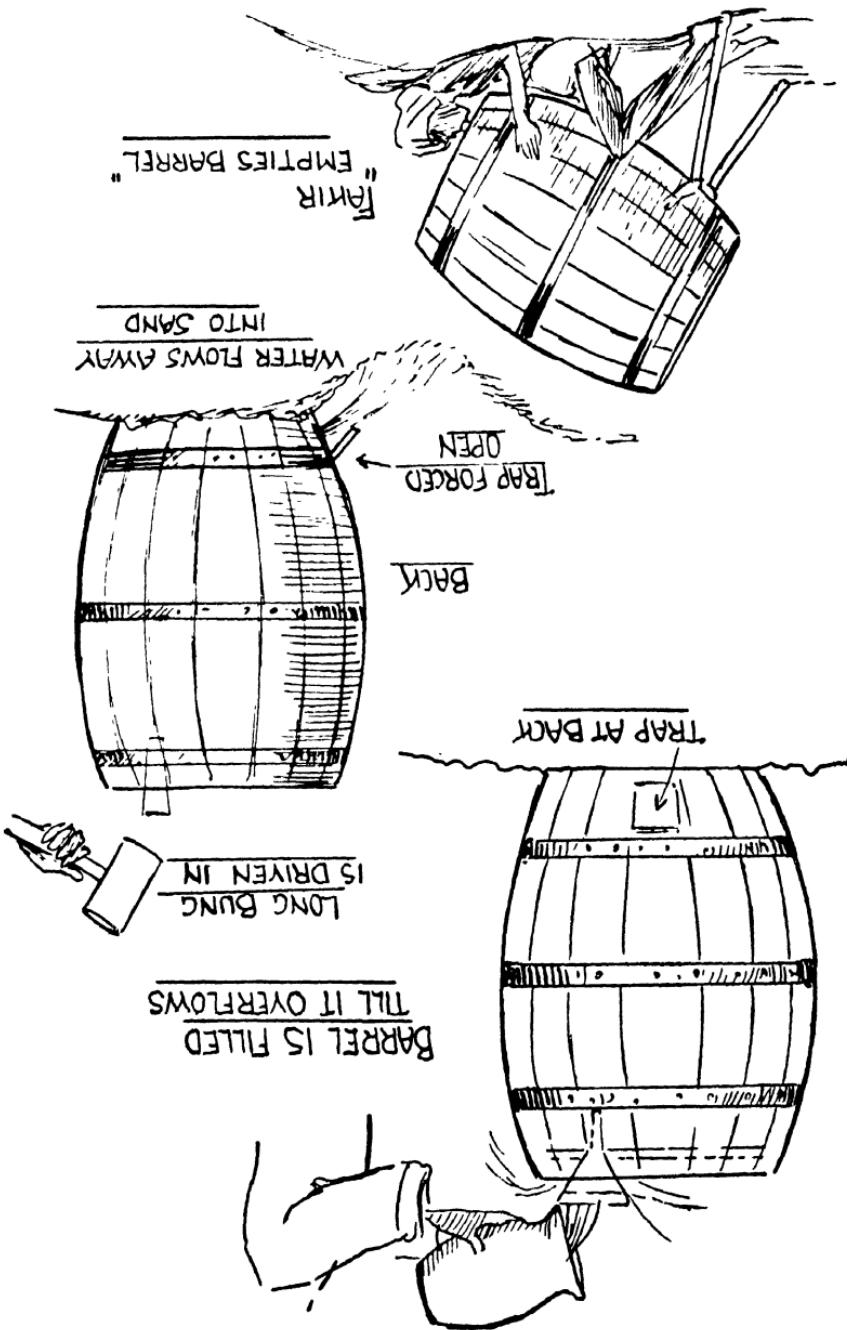
spectator. It all sounds childishly simple, but many clever people have been astounded by the trick.

It is interesting to note how many Eastern tricks are concerned with water. There is, for example, the famous Burmese illusion of swallowing a barrel of water. The description of this trick, with the secret, reached this country some time ago as part of a Burmese manuscript, for the loan of which I am indebted to Mr. Harry Price.

The performer comes forward with his band of musician-assistants, carrying a small portable tent, which they set up on the brow of a slight hill or at the top of an incline. From the interior of the tent they produce a large wooden barrel or cask (holding about 40 gallons) and a dozen leather buckets. The barrel is bound round with many iron hoops. The fakir climbs on top of barrel, sitting it astride. The assistants dance round the performer, playing their instruments the while, making a great noise. When the music and dancing has stopped the assistants roll and carry the barrel to the audience, who are seated in a semi-circle about 25 yards distant. The barrel is now thoroughly examined and weighed with beam scales by the onlookers. It is tapped and sounded, bands and staves scrutinized, particular care being taken to measure the inside depth of the barrel with the height outside, this being done with a long stick placed through the two-inch bung-hole—the only opening in the barrel. When the spectators are satisfied that the cask is an ordinary one, it is carried by the assistants to its original position at the top of the slope and placed on end with bung-hole at top. A funnel of hide is put into bung-hole. The performer then prostrates himself by the side of the barrel. Two of the musicians commence playing, while the other three seize buckets and rush to neighbouring brook or tank and fill buckets, pouring water through funnel into barrel. They make very many journeys (to create a big surprise as to the holding capacity of the barrel), the buckets being no more than half-full. After about a score or so of journeys to the tank or stream (crying aloud the while), the barrel is at last full to the very top. Two or more members of the audience

are now requested to again examine and weigh the water in barrel. This being done (with rod, as before) to see that the barrel is quite full the performer then rises and from the tent produces a raw-hide mallet and long spigot or plug, that just fits the bung-hole. The spigot is placed in the hole and knocked in with the mallet, the assistants dancing and playing the meanwhile. This is kept up for some minutes. The magician then orders his men to place the cask of water nearer the audience. The barrel is now rolled and carried with extreme difficulty to within about 12 feet of spectators. The performer then lies on his back on the ground, on a cloak he borrows from one of the company. The barrel is then pushed on to him, the hinder part raised by two pegs, the points of which are thrust in the ground. One of the assistants now withdraws the spigot, the magician immediately putting his mouth to the hole. The fakir is now seen to be drinking the water rapidly, making a great gurgling noise and many contortions, the musicians meanwhile making much music. After about ten minutes of this action, the performer suddenly shouts out loudly; the musicians drop their instruments and rush to magician. They remove barrel from off him, and of course being now quite light, they turn the barrel upside down and about a quart of water only runs out, the magician having swallowed the remainder. The magician exhibits cloak to show that not a drop has been spilled on it. Cloak and barrel are now passed round and weighed, the latter being minutely examined once again. Amid much applause the assistants take round funnel and collect many rupees.

The explanation is this. The barrel is a trick one, though almost impossible to find the deception. The extreme lower end of one of the wooden staves is hinged at about three inches up its length—the hinge being hidden behind one of the many iron hoops that encircle the barrel. When this little trap-door is pushed outwards, it makes an opening about three inches square. It is impossible to open it from the outside, though easily closed. The barrel is nearly filled with water, and then weighed. When taken to top of brow, the plug or spigot is knocked in. The water being quite incompressible, the action



EASTERN MAGIC

automatically opens the trap or valve at the bottom of the cask from the inside, the water rushing out down the other side of the slope away from the spectators. The trap is stiff enough not to open till pressure is applied by plug through the medium of the water. The musicians make great music, which drowns whatever sounds the water makes coming out of the cask. The trap is easily closed when in the act of lifting barrel. About two pints of water are left in the barrel. This is poured out at end of trick. The gurgling and noises made by performer is mere by-play. Also the supposed difficulty of removing the full (?) cask nearer to audience. Much rupees is made by this clever trick. This trick is not often done in India, owing to the bulky nature of the barrel, making it impossible to travel far with it.

Most Hindu tricks do not belong to the first class; but one which a member of the Magicians' Club saw in Delhi is really good.

For the purpose of this trick a gold wedding-ring was borrowed by the Hindu. He did not touch the ring as he took it from a member of the audience, who was certainly not a confederate. The person who lent the ring placed it on a plate held out by the Hindu, who then took in his hand a small brazier, from which smoke and flames were issuing. He dropped the ring into the fire which became fiercer. Putting the blazing brazier on the ground, the conjurer produced a piece of wire with a hook on the end of it, and after "fishing" in the brazier for some time pulled out the ring, which was beginning to melt from the effect of the fierce flames. That the ring had been ruined by the fire was beyond doubt.

The next thing which the Hindu did was to show to his audience a live hen, which he lifted up and placed carefully on to a large dinner-plate which lay on a table. The plate and the fancy paper doily which covered it had been previously shown by the Hindu to be genuine. He gave the hen a few sharp smacks on the back of the neck, with the result that the hen laid an egg which the conjurer deftly caught. The hen was then shooed away and the egg placed exactly in the centre of the plate. Taking the hooked piece of wire, the

Hindu pushed it into the egg, and, after groping with it for a few seconds, pulled out from the mass of slimy egg yellow the ring quite undamaged.

Now this was really smart conjuring. It was done like this. In the centre of the small brazier held by the Hindu was a tube which the audience could not see because of the chemically-induced smoke and flames. Into this tube which stood upright in the centre of the brazier the Hindu dropped the real ring. It went right through the tube unharmed by the fire and out at the bottom, because there was a hole at the lower end of the brazier. In other words, it was dropped through the tube into the Hindu's left hand which held the brazier. Next, he groped about in the flames with the piece of hooked wire until he found a duplicate ring lying in a place where it would be most fiercely subjected to the fire. Naturally, it showed signs of melting when hooked out.

The laying of the egg by the hen required only a simple sleight of hand effect by the Hindu, who already had the egg concealed about him. He merely tapped the hen's neck two or three times, and then made it appear as though the bird had really laid an egg. Any clever schoolboy conjurer could do that. But when the Hindu placed the hen on the plate he was able to slip the ring under the doily. The egg, you will remember, was left standing in the centre of the plate on the doily after the hen had been chased away. The rest was remarkably simple. The Hindu merely pushed his wire hook through the egg with the yellow of the egg sticking to it as you would expect. The clever part of this trick was that the audience were led to believe that the ring was pulled out of the egg when, in point of fact, nothing of the kind really happened.

Nearly everybody in England has seen, or at least heard of, the needle-swallowing trick, for this is most popular with European audiences. A number of needles and a separate length of thread are shown by the magician, who then places them into his mouth. After a chewing motion he pulls out the needles, which are shown to be properly threaded on the length of cotton. There are several ways of doing this—and

incidentally it was one of Houdini's favourite tricks—but a method used by Hindus is a highly-prized secret of the Indian magicians. The needles which the Indian juggler puts into his mouth have the points smoothed down to prevent his mouth being cut, and they are all highly magnetized so that, although they are put into the mouth one by one, they stick together and the tongue can lay them in the hollow of the cheek. But the trick is made the more impressive by the fact that the hands and mouth are thoroughly examined before it begins. But how does the conjurer produce from his mouth the needles on the thread? It seems impossible. But when I tell you that the Indian conjurer has concealed in his right nostril a duplicate set of needles already threaded, you will see how easy it is for him, when he puts his hand over the lower part of his face, to withdraw this faked set of needles and present them as the set which originally went into his mouth. He can at leisure remove the original needles from their place of concealment in the hollow of his cheek.

The trick of the cut turban which is afterwards restored as being whole again is one of the stock pieces of Indian magic. The usual method employed involves an exchange of the turban actually cut, or sometimes a mere pretence of cutting which is not so difficult as it may appear.

But the best method of performing this trick is one in which the turban has concealed in its folds a secret button. After the turban has been cut in two, the magician can slip over the button a small loop of cotton attached to one of the cut ends, the folds concealing the joining. It does not require much dexterity or ingenuity to carry out this trick with good effect.

## CHAPTER VI

### MIND-READING MAGIC

**T**HERE is no aspect of magic more fascinating than that of thought-reading.

Indeed, if I were asked to say in which branch of the professional magician's art the greatest ingenuity had been shown I would not hesitate to say it was in the realm of mind-reading—by trickery.

I believe there is such a thing as real thought-transference. A number of experiments have been made by earnest students of this subject—Professor Gilbert Murray among them. More recently my friend, Mr. J. C. Cannell, Vice-President of the Magicians' Club and Vice-Chairman of the Psychic Committee of the Club, and his wife, have carried out a series of experiments, later to be published in book form, I understand, showing how two people can establish a mental communication with each other. The results that Mr. Cannell has achieved, are, to say the least of them, startling.

But in this article I want to tell you how it is possible, by means of ingenious deception, to make even the shrewdest person believe that you can read minds.

I am certain that the average man does not realize how, by silent signalling, a great deal of information can be conveyed.

I could, in ten minutes, teach the average reader of this article how, silently, and without attracting suspicion to himself in the presence of other people, to signal the name of any card in the pack.

I will tell you exactly how this can be done. When I first demonstrated the idea to some fellow members of the Magicians' Club, at a social evening, everybody was deeply interested, and more than a few professional conjurers were puzzled.

In the social room of the Club I undertook quickly to discover the name of any card in the pack which might be chosen in my absence. I made it clear that I would never see the pack from which the card would be chosen and that, so far as I was concerned, there might be no pack at all. Had a pack of cards been produced by me, and if I had asked someone to choose one of the cards, my fellow magicians would have at once suspected that I was probably using one of the six known methods of forcing a card. As I never saw or handled the pack such a possibility was ruled out.

I left the social room of the Club and returned, when called, a minute later. Incidentally, I named the card selected when I was away from the room.

In the first test the card happened to be the nine of diamonds. I repeated the test several times, and nearly everybody present was quite baffled. All of them knew that a silent code was being used, but none of them could see how it was being done or what the code was. I found much pleasure in doing that trick, because, as it were, I was challenging the keenest magical minds to find out what was happening.

You might think that it would require a most complicated code silently to signal the name of any card in the pack, but this is not so. The system of signalling which I taught a secret confederate was one which any bright schoolboy would understand.

When I re-entered the social room of the Club during the first test I exercised a certain amount of showmanship, attempting to catch the "thought-waves" of those in the room. Actually I was giving a sly glance in the direction of my assistant. When I saw that the cigarette he was smoking was held between his lips on the extreme left of his mouth I knew that the chosen suit was diamonds. Had his cigarette been in the centre of his mouth it would have been hearts: if on the extreme right of his mouth, spades. But had he been holding his cigarette in his fingers I would have known that the chosen suit was clubs. So much for the suit itself. The method used for signalling the actual card was equally

simple, for it was indicated by a used match-stick. My confederate and myself had previously arranged that a corner of a small table at which he was sitting in the room would be divided, in our imagination, into a clock face. So, when I gave a sly glance at his table, I saw that the burnt head of the match-stick was pointing to nine on our imaginary clock face. And so we went on with our experiment, discovering other cards in the pack chosen in my absence. If the match-stick were pointing to eleven on the "clock", then I knew that the king of the particular suit had been chosen; if to twelve, the queen. As for the jack, it was signalled by my confederate having his right hand in his pocket.

Having explained this code to you, I am sure you will begin to understand how other information, even more complicated than the name of a particular card, can be conveyed. Before I go on to give you details of such codes, I should like to narrate how, at parties, when I have been asked to do some mind-reading magic, I have been able to cause the deepest mystification.

At one such party I picked up a book lying on the table showed also one of my ordinary visiting-cards. With the book, which happened to be a novel, and the visiting-card, I approached a woman in the audience, requesting that she should push the visiting-card into the top edge of the book at any point she wished, leaving only a fraction of an inch of the card projecting from the book. By this means the woman was choosing a particular page of the book. In order to eliminate from the minds of my audience the idea that the woman was my confederate, I then walked across the room to a man and asked him to open the book at the page selected in this way by the woman. I moved away into the centre of the room while he opened the book. "Now," I said to this man, "I want you to select in your mind either the left page or the right, at which the book has been opened. Which will you have?" The man replied: "I will choose the right-hand page." "Thank you," I said, "that means you have chosen page 176." The man was surprised because I was

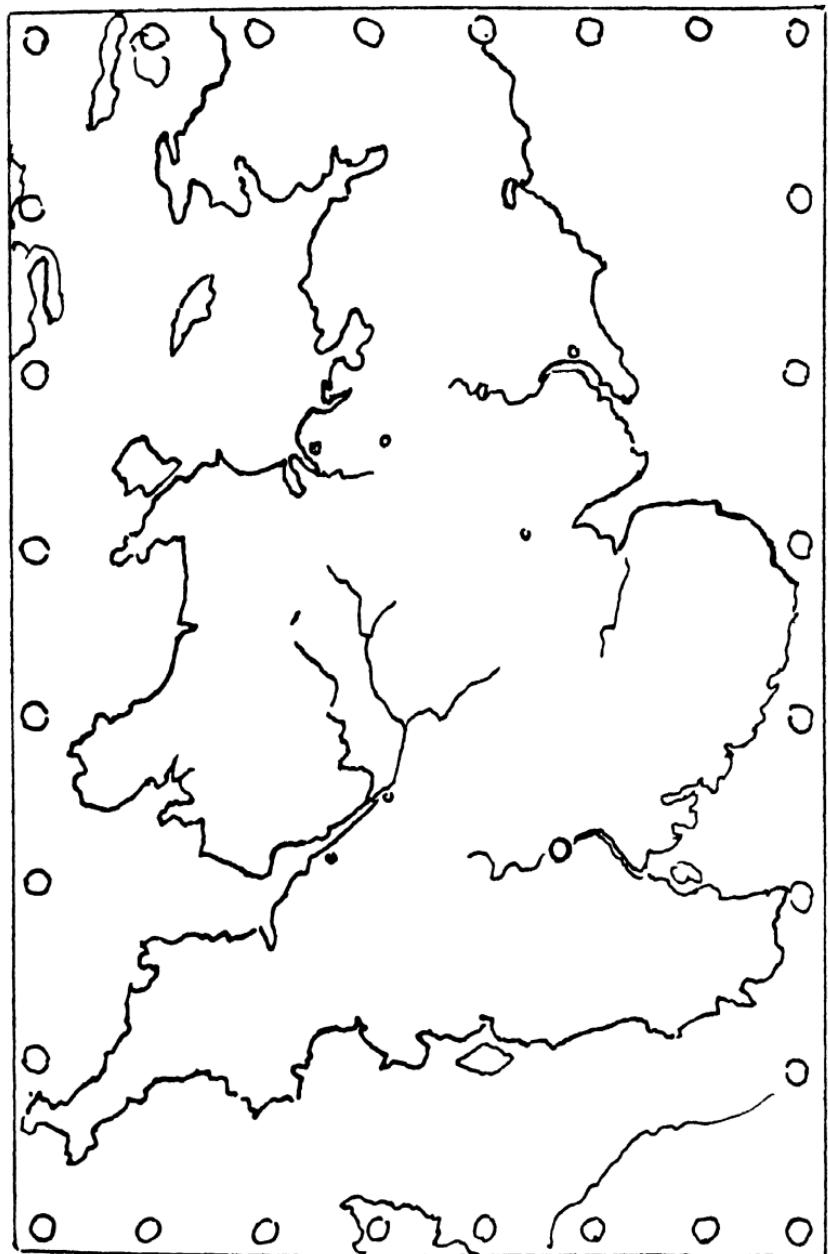
right. How could I possibly have known what the page was, he was thinking to himself.

"Please read carefully that page you have chosen," I requested further. He did so. "And now," I went on, "think of it with much concentration. I will try to catch your 'thought-waves'." The man thought hard and then slowly I began to describe the contents of the page. My description was astonishingly accurate, and then afterwards the man showed the page to the other members of the audience, they were equally surprised. Some thought they had seen a genuine demonstration of mind-reading, but actually it was a trick. Before handing the woman the book and the visiting-card to be inserted at the top edge of the book, I had secretly inserted another of my visiting-cards in the bottom edge of the book with the edge slightly protruding. While walking across the room to hand it to the man I turned the book round—no one noticed this—and pushed right into the book the card inserted by the woman, so that the man opened the book at a page which had really been chosen by me, although he did not know it. I had taken the trouble previously to memorize the contents of both page 175 and 176, so whichever he selected in response to my invitation, I could describe it accurately.

To guard against the one chance in two hundred of someone placing the card between the two pages already selected by me, sometimes, when dealing with a particularly shrewd audience, I secretly withdrew the card inserted by the woman as I walked across the room.

With the necessary showmanship—pretending, while the man is reading, to catch the "thought-waves"—this trick can be made to be thoroughly baffling.

Then, at the same party, I proceeded to perform another mind-reading trick which was even more mysterious. I produced a large board to which there was fastened, by means of drawing-pins, a map of England. I expressed the wish that, in my absence from the room, someone would choose a town, preferably an important town, on the map. I pointed out that the choice should be made silently, that anyone in the room



could make the selection, and that when pointing to the chosen town on the map, the selector should not touch it in case some mark, which I might be able to discover, should be left. When I returned to the room I glanced at the map and at once declared that the town chosen was Cardiff. I was right. Several times I repeated the experiment and never made a mistake.

Again you will guess that a confederate was assisting me, but I am sure you will not have discovered what the procedure was.

It was all done by what is called the "eye" code. I had taught my assistant to signal to me with his eyes and head in numbers up to ten. "But what," you will ask, "has that got to do with finding the name of a selected town on a map?" Well, first of all I will reveal to you the eye code. And, as you will realize, it can be used without attracting suspicious attention. Here is the eye code :

Head forward, eyes to the left : ONE. Head forward, eyes to the right : TWO. Head forward, eyes upward : THREE. Head forward, eyes downcast : FOUR. Head upward, eyes upward, FIVE. Head downward, eyes downcast : SIX. Head to the left, eyes straight ahead : SEVEN. Head downward to the left, eyes downcast, EIGHT. Head to the right, eyes straight ahead, NINE. Head downward to right, eyes downcast, NOUGHT. Head forward, eyes straight ahead is the neutral position.

All the movements, as you will realize, are natural, and can be made particularly successfully, seeing that no one knows who your confederate is.

Well, when I returned to the room faced with the task of finding the chosen town on the map, I was able to give a sly glance in the direction of my confederate and found that he was signalling to me by the eye code the numbers three

and four. Now, I explained to you that the map was fastened to the board by a number of drawing-pins. Indeed, there were more drawing-pins holding the map to the board than were necessary. On each of the four edges of the map there were eight drawing-pins. When I received the signal "three" and "four"—Head forward, eyes upward: THREE; Head forward, eyes downcast, FOUR; I counted along the drawing-pins at the top to "three" and then counted downwards on the right to drawing-pin number four. The rest was simple. I let my mind draw an imaginary line from drawing-pin number three at the top down the map and then drew an imaginary line from drawing-pin number four across the map until the imaginary lines met. I saw they met at Cardiff. To perform this trick is not nearly so difficult as it sounds.

But one little illusion I performed bore a strong resemblance to our childhood magic though it was much more ingenious and would require an exceptionally sharp mind to discover.

Selecting a friend, I said jokingly that he had mediumistic powers and that while his back was turned to the audience he could accurately describe any article I touched in the room, though no word would be spoken.

My friend took up his position with his back to the rest of the room, and, with great rapidity, I touched or pointed to various articles in the room. First an arm-chair, then a book, then a carpet, then the door, then somebody's elbow, and so on, each time my friend shouting out the article indicated. This time the secret was that together we had arranged and memorized a series of articles in the room and the order in which they would be touched.

If you think it must have been difficult for us to remember the order of so many things, you will understand that it was not so hard after all when I tell you of the code we used. My friend, who was taking the part of the "medium", had simply to remember the letters of the alphabet, so he could easily recall the first thing I would touch would be arm-chair—A; the next a book—B; the third the carpet—C.; the fourth the door—D; and so on. With a little practice we achieved great speed.

My next demonstration in mind-reading magic was one which puzzled my audience even more than ever. While my friend and "medium" sat blindfolded in a chair facing the audience I went round the audience and asked to be shown various articles, such as cigarette-cases, watches and pocket-books. The "medium" did not fail quickly and accurately to describe what was being shown to me. "Be so good as to describe this," I would call out to him when being shown a cigarette-case. "You have now been handed a cigarette-case," he would reply, and in response to a further question to him, he would say how many cigarettes it contained.

The signals were contained in the words forming the sentences, all of it being a verbal code. There are several such codes used by magicians, but here is one of the best:—

A is expressed by the word QUICK, QUICKLY

B is expressed by the word KIND, KINDLY

C is expressed by the word GOOD

D is expressed by the word POSSIBLE, POSSIBLY

E is expressed by the word PLEASE

F is expressed by the word SAY

G is expressed by the word NOW

H is expressed by the word NEXT

I is expressed by the words THIS TIME

J is expressed by the word THEN

K is expressed by the word WELL

L is expressed by the word HURRY

M is expressed by the word TELL

N is expressed by the word BUT

O is expressed by the word ALSO

P is expressed by the word RIGHT

Q is expressed by the word CORRECT

R is expressed by the word MORE

S is expressed by the words GO ON

T is expressed by the word HERE

U is expressed by the word FAST

V is expressed by the word (AN)OTHER THING

W is expressed by the word FURTHER

X is expressed by the word TRY

Y is expresesd by the words THIS TIME (same sound as I)

Z is expressed by the word NAME

TH is expressed by the words ALL RIGHT

WH is expressed by the word SURE

And for the numbers:—

1 is signalled by the word PLEASE

2 is signalled by the word BUT

3 is signalled by the word TELL

4 is signalled by the word MORE

5 is signalled by the words GO ON

6 is signalled by the word KIND, KINDLY

7 is signalled by the word SAY

8 is signalled by the word NEXT

9 is signalled by the word NOW

0 is signalled by the words ASIDE FROM, OUTSIDE OF

Of course, the questions asked must sound natural, but so long as the code word is there, the medium understands what is meant. To make it simpler for both, words can be abbreviated. Thus, for the word "leather" you can signal the letters "LE" which are represented by the words "hurry" and "please".

Supposing, for example, I was shown a watch while moving among the audience, then I would say something like this to my "medium". "Now, can you go further (W). but this time be quick (A)." My "medium", hearing the letters "WA" and knowing that this is an abbreviation for "watch"

says slowly, as though reading my thoughts with great difficulty, "You now have in your hands a watch." Then I say, using the number code, "Now (9), please (1) tell me the time by the watch." He replies "The time by the watch is 9.1," which is correct.

Another good mind-reading trick which I often performed, and this can be done as well in a theatre as in a drawing-room, consists of inviting members of the audience to write on a large piece of white cardboard the name of any celebrity. All that the "medium" in the distance sees, of course, is the back of the cardboard while I, as his assistant, stand by the member of the audience while he or she writes. Supposing the name "Hitler" were written. The "medium" on the stage or at the end of the drawing-room would immediately announce the fact. None of the codes I have just described to you are used in this case, the secret simply being the number of fingers shown by me as I hold the piece of cardboard for the person to write. Previously my "medium" and myself have arranged by number the names of, say, thirty or more celebrities. If, when the name "Hitler" is written, my "medium" sees three of my fingers on the back of the cardboard, he just remembers that "3" represents the name of the famous German Chancellor. If the name written is the fourteenth, shall we say, on the list, he sees first of all one of my fingers at the back of the cardboard as I hold it in quite a natural position for the spectator to write, and then he observes four of my fingers. Thus is conveyed to him the number fourteen. The rest of this numerical code is based on the same principles. When this is done in a theatre and my assistant is, perhaps, in the gallery where I cannot possibly see how many fingers he is showing, I have another assistant watching him from a secret place of observation on the stage through binoculars, and he communicates the number to me as I sit on a chair on the stage through a secret telephone, the end of which is close to my ear.

Thought-reading tests of this kind, however, are more suited to the drawing-room than to a large hall.

I have often mystified keen minds by improving on the old

parlour trick in which, in the absence of the performer, a pin is hidden in some part of the room. When I return my secret confederate signals to me. If the pin has been hidden in a high part of the room he conveys this fact to me by crossing his legs. If he does not cross his legs I know that the pin lies somewhere on the floor, and if in a moderately high place this fact is conveyed to me by my confederate taking out a cigarette and lighting it. You will realize how much simpler the task is made from the beginning by these signals. Then finally he communicates to me by means of the eye code the particular part of the room in which the pin is to be found, we having previously divided the room into ten imaginary sections. Supposing he signals section three to me and gives also the "high" signal, I know within a little where to look and soon I will find the pin.

Then there is the postcard trick which seems to involve the power of second sight. What I do is this. Standing at my table, I produce a packet of about twenty picture postcards, each portraying some famous place or building in London. I hand out the packet for inspection and they are found to be a genuinely mixed lot. Placing the packet of picture postcards on a tray I go among the audience and request that someone should select any postcard from the heap and retain possession of it, not allowing anyone else to see what postcard he has chosen. Returning to my table, and producing a number of slips of plain paper, I invite various members of the audience to call out the names of famous buildings or places in London. Some will mention, say, Westminster Abbey, others, St. Paul's, and so on. As I write the name on each slip I throw it into a hat on my table. Ultimately the slips are shuffled in the hat and a woman in the audience asked to select one. When she has done this, she is requested to read aloud the building or place she has selected. She may call out, for example, the Tower of London, and then at my request, the person who has previously chosen the postcard from the packet, shows it. It is found to contain a picture of the Tower of London.

The method which I adopt to perform this trick is this:

In the first place the packet of picture postcards which I place on the tray for the selection is not the packet which I originally show. When returning to my table to place the original packet of postcards on the tray I exchange them—this is done quite easily—for another packet which are all the same. That is to say, every postcard is a picture of the Tower of London. Thus I force the choice, taking care, of course, that the cards are upside down, making it impossible for the person to notice that all the cards are the same. On each slip of paper, as the names of the various buildings and places are called out, I write always the same name, the Tower of London, so that the hat contains twenty slips of paper with this name upon it. Whoever selects a slip from the hat must inevitably select the Tower of London.

One of the most baffling tricks known to the art of magic involves the use of a *News of the World*, or rather several copies of the *News of the World*. It is a thought-reading trick, and although I have performed it on many occasions before audiences of exceptional shrewdness, I have never known it to be detected.

I produce five different genuine newspapers bearing the same date, and suggest that in my absence from the room the guests should select a news paragraph or any other item from whichever newspaper they care to choose.

To remove any suspicion of confederacy from their minds, I ask that one person should select a newspaper another a particular page, a third a column in the newspaper, and a fourth an actual item. This makes it impossible for a choice to be forced in my absence. I request further that everyone in the room should see the paragraph selected so as to be able to "concentrate their thoughts" upon it when I return.

Another instruction I give them is that when the paragraph has been decided upon, the newspaper should be folded up again, placed anywhere among the other four, and then someone should open the door and shout "Ready", or, better still, strike once on a gong. This latter precaution is to make it impossible for anyone to communicate the choice by coming out to meet me.

When so summoned I return to the room, and though my eyes are closed, I begin immediately to describe in detail the item chosen, even giving names and addresses. I repeat this several times, and invariably everyone is baffled.

You can do it in your own home if you are prepared to take a little trouble and to spend a few shillings. I have seen scientists, famous K.C.s, and even brother magicians completely puzzled by this trick. The secret is that, in each case, the choice made by the guests was signalled to me in a simple yet effective manner before I returned to the drawing-room.

When I left the room I went to another room in the corridor to wait until someone shouted for me to return. In the meantime, I was busy receiving signals from the drawing-room, under the carpet of which a simple electric flex ran to the other room.

Under the carpet in the drawing-room was a tiny switch which any amateur electrician could easily make in a few minutes, and this my confederate operated with his foot. At the other end of the electric wire in the room where I sat, was a small electric bulb. I had concealed in this room where I was waiting a duplicate set of the newspapers.

The newspapers in the drawing-room and those in the other room were secretly numbered, and if, for example, one of the guests chose the *Daily Telegraph*, my confederate, knowing that this was No. 2, pressed twice with his foot on the switch under the carpet, where he was standing in readiness. I, therefore, saw two flashes on my lamp, and reached out for the *Daily Telegraph*. Then next I saw five flashes. That meant that page five had been selected. If the news item was the third from the top of the chosen column, then, seeing three flashes, I looked at the selected paragraph and quickly memorized its contents roughly, paying special attention to names and addresses.

A man with a reasonably good memory can absorb and retain a good deal in less than a minute. Coming back to the room with my eyes closed, I make a good pretence of

"reading the thoughts" of the guests, whom I ask strongly to concentrate upon the contents of the selected paragraph.

Just one word of warning concerning this excellent trick. Practice it with your confederate beforehand and arrange that if a page with a high number, like sixteen, is chosen, he will flash once and then, after a tiny pause, six more times. This avoids the clumsiness of having to flash sixteen times.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOME FAMOUS ILLUSIONS

**I**F I were asked to name the greatest living magician I should, without hesitation, say Horace Goldin. Without doubt he is the most outstanding personality in the world of magic to-day. He falls into line with such historical names as Maskelyne, Zancig, Houdini and De Kolta. I might, perhaps, raise a storm in asserting that, in his way, he is a greater man than any of them; but I quite seriously suggest that he is as great an artist as any one, and infinitely more lovable than all of them. As an illusionist he is certainly better than either De Kolta or Houdini. As a showman, he ranks level to Maskelyne—that is, second only to Houdini. He is an inventor of extreme ingenuity, and of his methods of inventing and building I shall have more to say later. He has foresight and initiative, patience and organizing ability.

It is difficult to find words to describe the more personal side of Goldin. His appearance, like his personality, is enormous. He invariably wears a large, broad-brimmed black hat, something like a mis-shaped sombrero, and an overcoat with a seal collar, both of which tend to accentuate his bigness. Any room which is occupied by Goldin is overcrowded. By himself, he would overcrowd the Albert Hall. I must add, too, that the illusion of tightness in Goldin's presence is by no means due to his material bulk. Many years ago, when he was considerably slimmer, he affected one in exactly the same way. It is wholly inexplicable, for there is nothing heavy or overpowering in his speech or gestures. He talks about himself, but never in a patronizing, self-advertising way. Goldin is one of the few men who can afford to disdain advertisement, for his achievements are in themselves publicity of the most valuable kind. He knows the theatres of Europe,

Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Hawaiian Islands, and the United States quite as well as he knows the theatres of England. He can recount stories of the old days of vaudeville, days before the talking pictures had arrived and when all but a few of the best established artists went in fear of that unwelcome attention of the gallery known as "the bird".

He talks of himself because he thinks he is an interesting person who has done interesting things. Which, of course, is quite true. He is, first and foremost, the Royal Magician. He has appeared at public and private command performances before King Edward, King George, the King of Saxony, and the King of Siam, and he possesses four tie-pins to commemorate the occasions. He is as proud as a child with a new toy over his pins, and sets them down as his most valued possessions. (I have met some men who tell me that Royal performances, while an undoubted tribute to one's skill, are really of little consequence, but there is nothing of this blasé attitude about Goldin.) His childish pride and lack of all unnatural modesty are his two most lovable characteristics. Success has left him quite unspoiled, and he is always ready to pay tribute to himself in exactly the same way as he would pay tribute to any other artist of high skill. He has no use for jealousies or false values. To him an artist is either good or bad, worthy of praise or dismissal from one's mind. He rarely disparages. If he thinks a performance bad, he will simply not remark on it. If he thinks it good, he will tell you why.

Goldin spends most of his day-time in theatres, inventing and building new effects. I know of no other illusionist so wedded to his art, nor one who finds so much pleasure in his work. He is a hard task-master, stern and critical, yet all his men love him and would do anything he asked of them. Outside the theatre, Goldin has little diversion. All his energies, his enthusiasm, his interest is thrown into his work. What little relaxation he takes is spent with his two dogs, which to him are the most remarkable, the most lovable, the most understanding four-legged creatures ever born.

Goldin's generosity is considerable, even allowing that



HORACE GOLDIN

The world's leading illusionist and inventor with the goat and assistants



he is one of the highest-paid magicians in the world. His friends know only too well that it is no very difficult matter to impose on his good nature. For he is of that peculiarly undemonstrative type which finds it easier to express itself in actions rather than in words. If he appreciates your company and your friendship, he tells you so in the form of presents. I myself have been the recipient of his generosity on numerous occasions, and, although Goldin invariably embarrasses me with his gifts, I realize that, from his own peculiar standpoint, he could pay me no higher compliment.

It is not generally known that Goldin is a Polish-born American citizen. He learned the rudiments of magic in the United States, and it was there that he laid the foundations of his great reputation. He was comparatively unknown, however, when he first appeared at the Palace Theatre, London, more than a quarter of a century ago. His performance created a profound sensation and completely revolutionized the prevailing methods of showmanship. Such well-known magicians as Morritt, De Kolta and Hertz, who were then tremendously popular with London audiences, invariably gave only one illusion to each performance, spending their time with a lot of magnificent explanation, and only turning to the illusion proper as a sort of grand finale. They were rarely paid more than £20 a week (salaries in London were then known as "turn" money), and the best available engagement in London was a booking to cover the Oxford, the Tivoli and the Pavilion—one to several weeks at each theatre.

Goldin produced several first-class illusions in his one performance, and after a week's trial was booked indefinitely for an exclusive run at the Palace. His success immediately gave rise to a number of imitators, the most notable of whom was Carl Hertz. Hertz made a terrible mistake. He staked his reputation as one of the world's greatest magicians on a single turn of Fortune's wheel—and lost. His wonderful vanishing bird-cage trick sufficed to keep him for many years in the public eye, but from the day he decided to produce a performance in imitation of Goldin he slowly but definitely

declined. He found himself branded as a cheap imitator; fellow magicians treated him with contempt, and before very long he was content to appear at second- and even third-rate music-halls.

Strangely enough, Rowland's activities on the Continent only served to enhance Goldin's reputation. Rowland copied some of Goldin's illusions pretty faithfully, but he failed to perform them in anything like the polished style of Goldin. When Goldin toured Germany, the public at once fell to comparing the two men, and to Rowland's disadvantage. Even had Rowland been anything like a worthy magician, Goldin, who as an inventor was capable of creating new illusions as soon as the old were over-imitated, need never have feared him.

But, apart from establishing himself as a new force in magic, Goldin's *première* at the Palace was of inestimable service to the magical profession as a whole. I have already referred to the "turn money" of £20 per week. This was the sum paid to the world's finest magicians; the smaller fry had to be content with money that to-day would be sniffed at by a stage-hand. The truth was that magicians were at once the most popular and the most underpaid of all public entertainers. Goldin set a new fashion with theatrical promoters, and his appearance in England was the commencement of an era of prosperity for the magical profession. Had it not been for Goldin, Houdini would never have drawn his £900 a week at the Palladium in later years.

Oswald Williams once summed up Goldin's influence at a dinner of the Magicians' Club in these words:

"Every magician should pay ten per cent of his salary to Horace Goldin, for it was he who first established us as artists worthy of high payment."

Goldin's powers of invention are too well known to need much comment here. His famous illusion "Sawing a Woman in Half" is still ranked as one of the greatest magical effects the world has seen, and it is worth noting that no less a magician than Howard Thurston sought (and was granted) the right to perform it in the United States. There is one point

with reference to Goldin's methods of invention which is as remarkable as it is unique. Many of Goldin's best effects have been inspired by what I can best describe as a sort of psychic trance. In this state, Goldin actually sees a new illusion performed. Later he makes notes on the performance, and sits down to think out a feasible method by which the effect was obtained. He is, I believe, the first magician openly to admit he has obtained practical help in his work from an agency which, if not spiritual, savours of the supernatural.

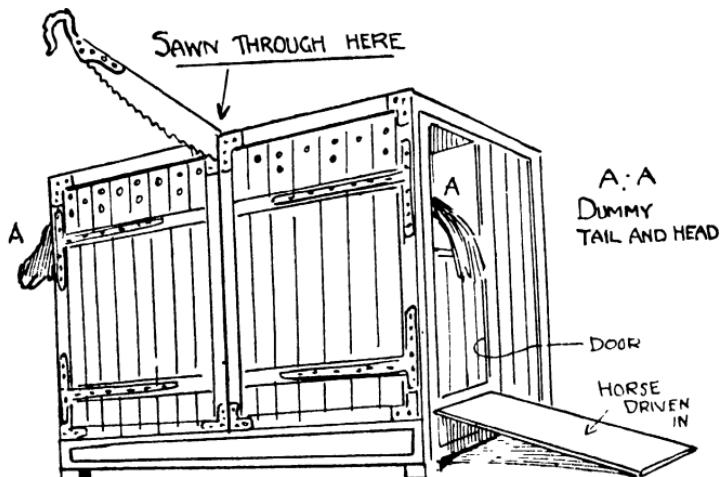
One of the most ingenious illusions associated with the name of Horace Goldin is "Sawing a Horse in Half".

There is no need to explain the effect; the title tells the audience nearly everything about it. The performer shows a large horse box, raised on four short legs from the stage. The horse is brought on to the stage, walks up into the box, and the door is closed. There is a large hole cut out of the door by which the horse enters the box and another in the door by which he eventually leaves it, so that during the performance of the illusion the audience see the horse's head and his tail. Yet, under these very difficult conditions the illusion is performed; two men, using a double-handed saw, cut right through the centre of the box. When they have finished their work the illusionist opens the door and leads out the horse—unharmed.

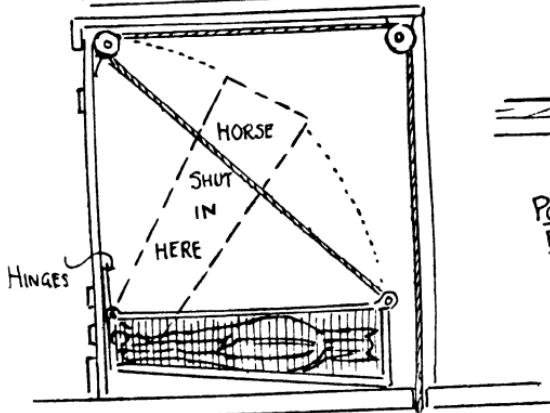
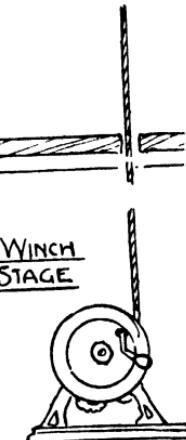
I need scarcely point out that the illusion is a hundred times more difficult than the well-known illusion of "Sawing a Woman in Half".

If the reader will now turn to the diagram showing the section of the box he will form a good idea of the working of the illusion. Obviously the first thing to do is to get the horse out of the way of the saw, and this is managed by the "horse container" in the box. When entering the box the horse steps at once into the "container", which is then lowered into the floor of the box by means of two cables passing through the stage at the back of the box. If the front of the box were then removed the box could be shown empty.

## A MAGICIAN'S SWAN SONG



AUDIENCE VIEW OF HORSE BOX

POWERFUL WINCH  
BELOW STAGE

The mechanism below the stage necessary for the lowering and raising of the "horse container" is clearly shown in another diagram.

The diagram of the plan of the box shows how the horse's head and tail are apparently seen by the audience. A dummy head and a dummy tail are hinged to two rods concealed in the front of the box. In order that the head and tail may have a "live" appearance two wires are connected with them and carried up to the flies. The diagrams show how the dummy head and dummy tail are pulled out of the box into position and then returned to their places when the horse is to make his final appearance from the box.

Although the effect of this illusion is sensational it will be seen that the working is far more simple than one would expect it to be, but that is because the illusion has been worked out and tested by a Master Magician. In my opinion it is a brilliant piece of real magic.

Goldin, in my opinion, is the finest exponent of sleight of hand on the magic stage to-day. Although his "props" include many tons of material for spectacular illusions, he can hold the absorbed attention of an audience with his wide repertoire of smaller tricks.

Not many people are aware that Harry Price, the psychic investigator, is one of the greatest magical experts in the world. He does not, of course, perform illusions, but he has contributed, through his experiments and research, much that is valuable to the lore of magic.

An excellent example of his ingenious inventiveness is the Crystal "Evulgograph", the special attraction of which is that the trick can be performed either on a stage or at closer quarters in a drawing-room.

The performer sends down slips of paper and envelopes with the request that the recipients of same write down any questions they please, fold the papers up themselves, and place in the envelopes, which they fasten down. Sealing-wax and a small spirit-lamp is then sent down with the wish that the envelopes shall also be sealed. The envelopes are numbered on the face, 1, 2, 3, etc. An assistant then collects the envelopes

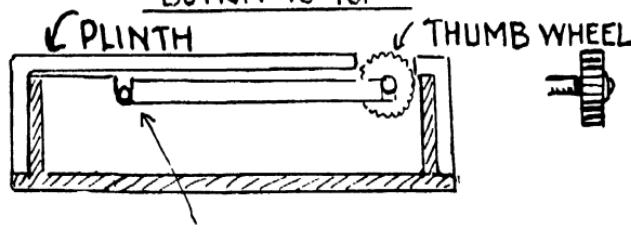
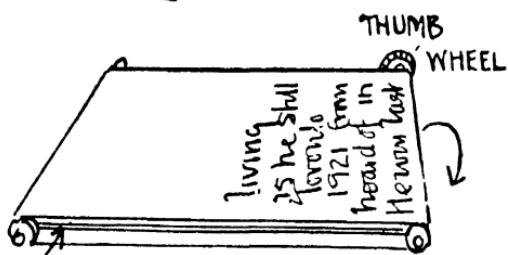
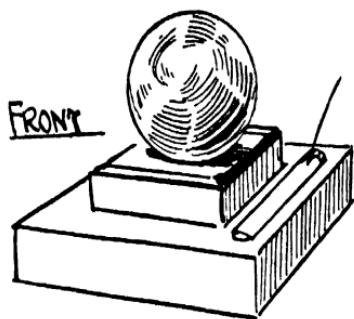
(say a dozen) and brings them on to the stage, where they are ceremoniously burnt in a spirit flame on an iron tripod, in full view of the audience. The performer, who poses as a wonderful crystal "scryer", or gazer, now asks for his crystal to be brought on. The large glass sphere, reclining on a velvet stand, is brought on by an assistant, and is taken by the performer, who takes the crystal amongst the audience, asking each person who wrote the message to place his fingers lightly on the ball for a few moments "to get proper contact". When all have touched the crystal, he then returns to the stage (or his stand in the drawing-room) and proceeds to read the question in the crystal (and the *number* of the questioner), and giving suitable answers—working up the effect in the usual manner.

Now for the explanation. No confederate is employed, and the audience can bring their own paper, etc. The principal secret is in the base of the stand on which the crystal rests. This base is really a box containing a ribbon of linen wound round two rollers, and actuated by a brass toothed wheel, painted black, which protrudes  $1\frac{1}{32}$ nd of an inch through the top of the base (or "lid" of the box) and the velvet covering. This wheel comes exactly under the right thumb when crystal and the stand are held in a natural manner.

The "lid" of the base or box is hinged in the centre, and, when opened, exposes the linen strip, on which is pasted a piece of ruled paper, above and below which are glued two narrow strips of velvet. At the front angle of the box, at the top, is a narrow aperture or slot, running nearly the width of the base. *Now, anything written upon the paper inside the box can be read through this slot without the audience having any knowledge of this fact.*

After your assistant has collected the envelopes, he "switches" the originals for an identical dummy packet (likewise numbered), and "passes off" the real ones to the wings, where he or another assistant opens the envelopes and copies rapidly, but clearly, the twelve questions on to the slip of paper pasted to the linen ribbon. A "table" of

# SOME FAMOUS ILLUSIONS



metal inside the box, under the paper, makes this the work of a few moments. The assistant writes the questions, and puts their proper numbers against them in the margin. He then closes down the "lid" of the base, replaces the crystal, and all is ready. By this time the performer has burnt the envelopes.

I mentioned the fact that two strips of velvet were pasted above and below the paper on which are written the questions. When the assistant closes the base, ready for working, the front strip of velvet comes exactly behind the viewing aperture. The performer can now take the whole apparatus amongst the audience with impunity, he keeping his right thumb on the toothed wheel. The slightest movement of his thumb (absolutely invisible a foot away) uncovers this velvet shutter and reveals the first question and its number in the margin. He then proceeds to answer the question in an appropriate manner, and so on with the other eleven questions. The next and last movement of the thumb which, bear in mind, has never shifted its position, re-covers the slot with velvet and restores the apparatus to its original condition, so that all sides of the stand may be shown. The drawings will make this clear.

For the next performance the ribbon is merely unwound and a fresh portion of ruled paper pasted on top of the used piece. The end of the linen strip or ribbon is fastened to the forward roller with a brass spring clip, which is removed when required to take out table.

A very fastidious performer might be inclined to have another stand, without the mechanism, so that at the end of the performance everything could be examined. The conjurer would first hand the crystal to the audience, and at the same moment the assistant would come in and take away the stand. The performer would tell him not to take the stand away, and the assistant would at once put it back on the table, having made the necessary "switch" in the wings.

The "Evulgograph" has been thoroughly "tried out" and never fails to leave the audiences spellbound with amazement at the uncanny way in which the performer reads the questions.

One last tip: As large "crystals" suitable for stage work

are extremely expensive, an effective and showy substitute will be found in a round-bottomed glass boiling-flask, as used by chemists, of one-litre capacity (at a cost of about 2s.), filled with water (preferably distilled) and sunk, neck downwards, in a velvet-covered block of wood, which is also slightly hollowed out to accommodate the spherical contour of the flask. At a very short distance this substitute is quite indistinguishable from a genuine crystal. See illustration.

To Price's laboratory in Kensington come magicians and students of the occult from all over the world. One day there called upon him a strange-looking man who looked like a Chicago racketeer. Here is the rest of the story in Price's own words :

“When I had recovered my breath, and with my finger on the push of the fire-alarm, I asked him what he wanted. He informed me that he was the pastor of a small spiritualist church in Oshkosh, Wis., and that he was travelling Europe in search of material for a lecture tour. Could he have some photographs or lantern slides of my laboratory? I said he could not, and did he want anything else?

“It was then that he informed me that he was also the leading medium of Oshkosh, Wis., and that his real reason for inflicting himself upon me was that he wanted a job. He said he was very hard up, and nearly ‘all in’. ‘Another week, doc., and I’m sunk.’ Could I help him? I said I was afraid I could not. He had too much local colour. Not to mention a pronounced atmosphere.

“Then he offered to teach me crap shooting. I resisted the temptation and remarked that it did not sound respectable. Finally, he offered to demonstrate his mediumistic powers before me. I consented.

“He pulled out his pocket-book, tore a page from it, and handed it to me. He asked me to tear it into six pieces of equal size. Having done this, I was requested to write the names of five living friends, and one dead one on the slips. I was told to turn my back while I wrote the names and folded the papers. This I did.

“The ‘reverend’ from Oshkosh, Wis., then asked me to

hold the 'dead' billet in my hand, he placing his hand over mine 'in order to make contact with the cerebral vibrations emanating from the paper' and so that he could 'tune in his personality' to that of the aforesaid emanations. I looked duly impressed.

"After the emanations had done their bit I was asked to place all the billets in a hat and shake them up. I obeyed. I was then asked to light a Bunsen burner and slowly consume each billet in the flame. At the fourth burning the medium shouted: 'Blow it out!' I did this, opened the partly-destroyed paper and admitted that on it was the name of the person (purely fictitious) alleged to be dead. I was impressed.

"I was convinced of several things, amongst them being the following: (a) The medium did *not* see the names I wrote, and, had he done so, it would not have helped him; (b) he did *not* handle the papers; (c) when the papers were mixed it was quite impossible to recognize any particular one; (d) that the fact of his using his own paper did not affect the result.

"I remarked that the trick (a pained expression clouded his countenance)—I mean experiment—was a good one and asked him to do it again.

"The second time I used my own paper and sent him out into the passage while I wrote upon and folded the billets. Then I called him in; he 'contacted' as previously—with exactly the same result.

"I persuaded him to do it a third time, and then I noticed that when 'making contact' he held my hand (containing the 'dead' billet) in a peculiar manner; in fact, he inserted the forefinger of his right hand into my fist, and must have actually touched the billet. So after the 'contacting' business I took the billet out of the room and, with the aid of a powerful objective, minutely scrutinized the paper. It appeared quite innocent of any markings.

"But what I had seen started a certain train of thought. When I returned to the room, mixed the billets in the hat, and commenced burning them, my powers of observation were fixed on *one* thing—the *colour* of the flame made by the

burning billets. The burning of the second billet aroused my suspicions. Was I mistaken, or did I fancy that the flame was of a slightly greenish tinge?

“At this moment the medium shouted the usual ‘Blow it out!’ but I insisted upon burning it to the (I was now convinced) green and bitter end.

“‘Wonderful, isn’t it?’ said the man from Oshkosh, Wis. ‘It is,’ I replied, ‘but not very. What do you carry it in—a sponge?’”

“At last he owned up. As I concluded, the faint tinge in the ‘dead’ billets *was caused by sulphate of copper*—better known as ‘bluestone’. What happened was that in his pocket was a small sponge saturated with a weak solution of sulphate of copper and water; it makes a pale blue liquid absolutely invisible, when dry, on a piece of paper. Just previously to ‘contacting’ he touched the sponge with the tip of his finger which he cleverly inserted in my fist while holding it, and touched the billet. The mark was absolutely invisible, but there was enough of the metallic copper transferred to the paper to give the flame a *very slight* green tinge.

“‘Well, doc., is it worth fifty bucks to you?’ It was not, but I gave him something that helped him to shorten—slightly—the road between Kensington, South, and Oshkosh, Wis.”

Another interesting personality in the world of modern magic is A. S. Davis, who is, perhaps, better known under his professional name of Stanlyn. He is one of the new generation in magic. Unlike some of the latest recruits to wizardry, Davis makes no attempt to upset the old traditions of magic. I do not know where he has obtained his very considerable knowledge of the art, but certain it is that he observes a very healthy respect for the ideas which have made magic the force in entertainment which, in spite of the present slump in things theatrical, it still is. I admire Davis for that, if for nothing else.

But like most good showmen, Davis appreciates the value of originality. His personality shines through all his magic; he gives a subtle newness to his tricks, to his patter. A friend once described him to me as importing a “new angle” to

everything he does, and I can think of no more apt description. Davis is a magician of new angles. True, he performs tricks that other magicians perform, but he performs them in a style that is entirely his own.

It can be understood, therefore, that he has decided gifts, both as an improver of old tricks, and an inventor. His improvements, in particular, appeal to me, because I have long believed that it is often more difficult to improve on an old trick than to think out something entirely new.

The "Magic Figure" is a mysterious trick which Davis always performs brilliantly.

The conjurer shows six large cards, numbered, in large figures, from one to six; plain white cards, measuring about six inches by two, are very suitable. Each card has a small hook attached to it, and all the cards can be examined by the audience.

Stretched across the room—or stage—is a piece of cord; the cards are hung on the cord with the figures facing the audience.

The performer then hands out a tray with a number of counters on it; a member of the audience is asked to satisfy himself that the counters are numbered from one to twenty-four, and that there are not two alike. The counters are then tipped into a bag and someone is asked to put his hand into the bag, take out a counter, and read the number on it. We will suppose that the figure is 10. The performer asks the audience to remember that number and to think of it; sometimes it may be advisable to write the figure down on a slate, so that there may not be any dispute about it.

The large cards are then taken down, and anyone can mix them together, to show that it does not matter in what order they are arranged. When this has been done the performer hangs the cards on the cord with their back towards the audience.

The magician then asks someone to think of one of the cards—that is to say, any number from one to six. The person helping in this way is asked not to disclose the number to anyone, but to think hard of it.

"Now," says the performer, addressing this person, "I want you to do a little sum in your head; don't be alarmed, because it isn't difficult. You are thinking of a number; no one knows what that number is. Each time I lift a card from the cord I want you to add one to that number. Just go on adding one at a time in your head. Directly the sum comes to ten—the figure on the counter taken from the bag—I want you to say 'Stop'. Quite easy, isn't it?"

The conjurer proceeds to lift cards, one at a time, until the person assisting him says "Stop". The performer then asks the person what number he thought of, and when the answer is given the performer, still holding a card in his hand, turns it round and shows that he has contrived to stop on that number. The card is then hung up facing the audience—just for effect.

The experiment can be carried out with two or three members of the audience at once, and they can arrange between themselves to think of different numbers; the result in each case is the same.

The bag in which the counters are placed is a changing bag, and one compartment of the bag contains a number of counters all alike, for the performer has to force the figure 10.

When the cards are hung up with their backs to the audience the performer stands behind them and therefore he can see the figures. The first three cards he lifts up can be any cards, but the fourth card lifted up must be 6, the next 5, and so on down the scale. A little thought will show the reader that the trick then works automatically, for the number of cards lifted added to the number of which the person is thinking must come to 10. If the assistant has secretly decided to think of 6, the performer is told to stop when he has lifted the fourth card—the 6; if the number thought of is 5, then "Stop" is called at the fifth card, which is 5, and so on.

The trick can be done with cards numbered 1 to 12, in which case the number to be forced by the changing bag must be 20, and the eighth card lifted up must be 12; then the cards are lifted in the way shown, 12, 11, 10, down to 1.

If the magician is going to use 18 cards, the number to

be forced is 30, and the twelfth card must be 18, the thirteenth 17, and so on. If the trick is to be done with 24 cards the number to be forced will be 40, and the sixteenth card is 24. Done with six cards in the way described, the trick is sufficiently mystifying for any ordinary audience. Of course, the performer is not bound to use counters; he can force the figure 10 in any way he likes.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MORE FAMOUS ILLUSIONS

*PASSING an Alarm Clock through a Sheet of Glass.* The title describes the effect. On a little stand, with a small platform back and front, is a frame into the grooves of which a sheet of glass is placed. For a reason which will be explained presently a red triangle is painted on both sides of the glass.

An alarm clock is shown and made to ring. The bell is stopped and the clock is placed in front of the glass. A cardboard cover is placed over the clock; the cover, which just rests on the platforms, back and front, has no lid, and the glass is visible above the top of the cover. The front has a circular window and a little shutter on the outside, which, when lowered, covers the window.

When these preliminary preparations have been made the stand is placed on a centre table and the performer explains what he has done. He then lowers the shutter, covering the face of the clock for a second. Having pronounced the magic word—or fired his revolver—or touched the cover with his wand—the magician lifts the cover, and shows it to be empty. The audience see that the clock is behind the sheet of glass.

And now for the secret.

The stand is not faked in any way, but the cover is not quite innocent. At the back of it there is a dummy window with a dummy clock face covered with mica or celluloid to represent glass. There is also a shutter to the window.

The clock is fitted with a duplicate face at the back, but this duplicate face drops away when a tiny catch is moved.

To set the trick for the performance the clock, with the duplicate face towards the audience, is on the table. The stand is empty with the sheet of glass resting against it. The cover has both shutters up with the window towards the audience.

The performer hands out the glass and stand and then places the glass in the grooves of the stand. The clock is placed on the platform in front of the glass.

The red triangle is painted on both sides of the glass, because, without it, the audience at a distance cannot be sure if the clock is behind or in front of the glass.

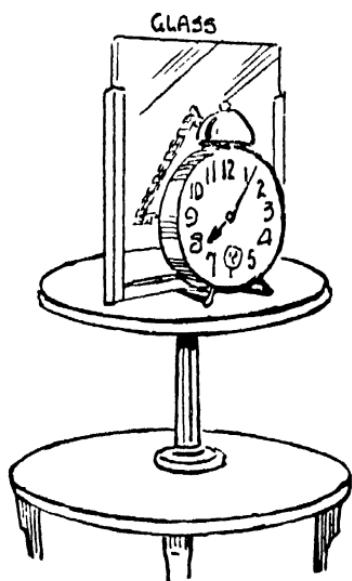
The performer lowers the cover over the stand and moves it to the table. While he is standing in front of the table and patterning about what he has done, an assistant pulls on a cord which causes the top of the table to revolve. The shutter at the back of the table is up and therefore the appearance of the cover has not changed. The shutter is then closed.

When the performer removes the cover and shows that the clock is now behind the glass he secretly closes the back shutter. When removing the clock the performer allows the duplicate face, which is painted black inside, to fall on the top of the table, which is also black. The performer can then take out the sheet of glass and hand it out for examination.

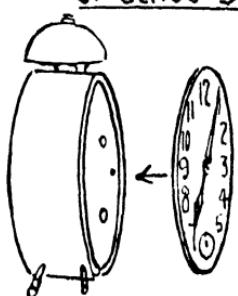
The knowing ones in the audience will naturally jump to the conclusion that the stand has merely been turned round and that therefore the clock has been specially prepared for the trick, but their calculations are entirely upset when the performer casually shows the clock at the end of the performance and lets everyone see that the back of the clock is quite ordinary!

The working of the trick, including the method of causing the top of the table to revolve, is plainly shown in the accompanying diagrams.

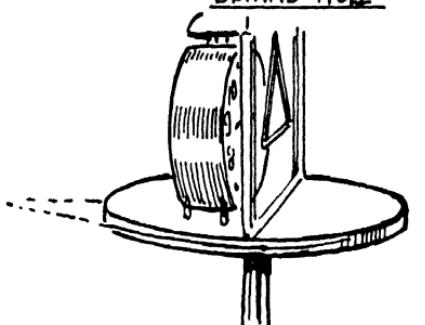
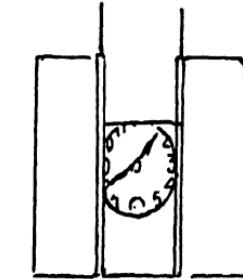
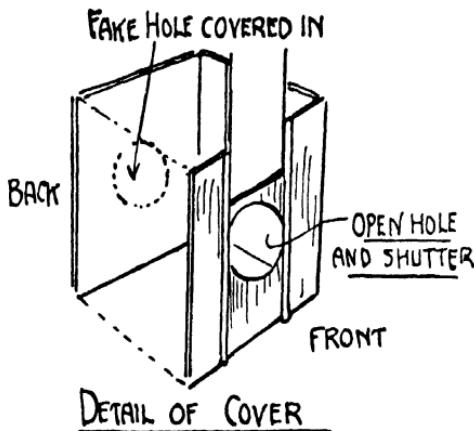
**A** *NEW Penetrating Tumbler.* I take it that every reader is familiar with the trick in which a hat is placed crown downwards on a glass covered with a handkerchief. When the performer pronounces the magic word the hat slowly sinks and the glass appears to be passing through the crown of the hat. The hat sinks until it rests on the table—the handkerchief, of course, being between the hat and the table. Then the performer puts his hand into the hat and takes out the



CLOCK . AUDIENCE SIDE  
OF GLASS SCREEN



DUMMY DIAL  
FITS INTO BACK  
OF CLOCK



HALF TURN OF PEDESTAL  
TAKES CLOCK TO BACK OF GLASS

glass, thus proving to the audience that the glass really did pass through the crown of the hat, although the crown is uninjured.

The trick is usually performed with the aid of a special glass-topped table. When the performer covers the glass with the handkerchief he secretly causes a metal disc attached to a rod to rise from the centre leg of the table. The disc rises to the height of the glass. The conjurer secretly loads the glass into the hat (the moves will be explained presently) and places the hat on the top of the disc, which, being covered by the handkerchief, appears to the audience to be the top of the glass. The mechanism in the leg of the table allows the disc to descend slowly, and thus the audience are convinced that the glass is passing through the hat; this conviction is intensified when the performer takes the glass from the hat.

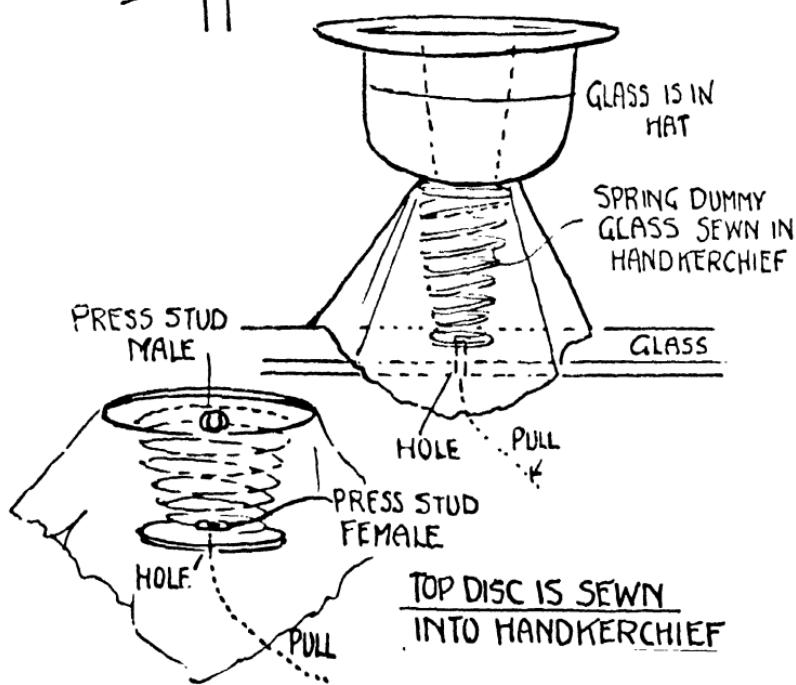
The drawback to the trick is, of course, the table. No drawing-room performer would care to take such a large and cumbersome piece of apparatus about with him.

Mr. Ned Williams, the well-known magician, has devised a very ingenious method of doing the trick without a special table, and I am indebted to him for permission to publish his version of the trick.

By means of this very simple device the trick can be performed on any table in a room. The magician who wishes to do the trick on a stage need not use a table; he can secure a much better effect by doing the trick on a sheet of glass resting on the backs of two chairs.

The whole secret, in this version of the trick, is in the handkerchief with which the glass is apparently covered. Attached to the centre of the handkerchief is an ingenious device consisting of two discs joined together by a concentric spring. The spring, being released, carries the top disc upwards till it is on a level with the tumbler to be used in the trick.

At the beginning of the trick the two discs are held together by means of a large press stud; in the centre of one disc the "male" portion of the stud is fixed and in the centre of the other, the "female" portion of the stud. Now, if the



two discs are pressed together you have a neat handy fake, only about a quarter of an inch thick.

If the performance is to be given in a drawing-room the magician, in covering the glass with the handkerchief, presses his fingers and thumb between the two discs, the spring causes them to open out to the full extent and the device covered with the handkerchief appears to the audience to be the glass covered with the handkerchief. The glass, however, is really behind the handkerchief.

The performer now covers the handkerchief (under which the audience believe the glass to be standing) with a hat, but he "changes his mind" and tells the audience that he will stand the hat on the glass. It is at this point that the performer secretly loads the glass into the hat. If the reader will hold a hat with his thumb over the brim and his fingers inside the hat he will see that he can easily lift the glass by inserting his second and third fingers in it and spreading them apart; the glass thus held is gently lowered into the hat which is then placed on the "fake"—which the audience believe to be the glass.

The performer now presses down on the hat; to the audience he appears to be forcing the glass through the crown of the hat. The movement is continued until the two discs clip together, when the performer produces the glass from the hat and flicks away the handkerchief.

For the stage version of the trick the performer uses a sheet of glass in place of a table. The glass rests on the backs of two chairs. A thread attached to the upper disc passes through the lower one and through a hole in the sheet of glass. The thread is then carried along under the sheet of glass, through a ring fixed to the back of one of the chairs, and then through a ring in the stage and so out to a concealed assistant.

The trick proceeds as before until the inverted hat is placed on the fake covered with the handkerchief, when the assistant, by pulling on the thread, causes the hat to sink slowly down to the sheet of glass.

**CHEFALO.** Chefalo is certainly the most picturesque, besides one of the most prominent of modern magicians. There is something quaintly Dickensian in his appearance—dark, quick-moving eyes which, when they come to rest, are solemn and thoughtful; a shock of wiry, rebellious hair; and a lean, clean-shaven face which never betrays its owner's thoughts.

Chefalo's strongest characteristics are his lack of emotion and his ingenuity. In the many years I have known him I have never known him show open surprise, disappointment, regret, delight, or any of the usual emotions which typify humanity. His face is set in a rigid mould, and I often wonder what would happen if he were suddenly to receive the news that he had drawn a winning horse in the Calcutta Sweep. I have known him show excitement—but in a way that a stranger might take for sheer extravagance. He is an inveterate cigar-smoker—the heaviest I know—and in his tenser moments he has a habit of puffing at his cigar for a minute or so, throwing it away, and immediately re-lighting another. In this way he disposes of ten cigars in almost as many minutes.

His ingenuity seems limitless. It would, indeed, be impossible to imagine him confounded by any set of circumstances. He has a precise, analytical brain, capable of sizing up a situation in a flash, and as quickly forming his deductions. Once his mind is set on a purpose, he never wavers until that purpose is achieved. He is, too, extremely generous, as one may deduce from the number of exclusive magical secrets he has given me for this book. He is invariably dressed in the trim fashion of the successful business man; had he not been a magician, he would have made a splendid commercial organizer. Chefalo has the not unusual Continental habit of speaking several languages, and I think I envy him that gift more than any other.

He is a brilliant showman—in fact, I place him second to none in this respect. And like all good showmen, he is proud of his ability as such. He will tell you that wherever he appears, he invariably draws record houses. And he will add, in a perfectly ingenuous way, that he is really very sorry

for the magician who has to appear after him. He is quite genuine in this sentiment—he actually feels regretful that any member of his own profession should have to follow after himself, and thus suffer by comparison to his own masterly performance. He states these things not so much as expressions of feeling as hard, undisputable facts, and consequently one exonerates him from any charge of braggartism. When talking to Chefalo I have always experienced a subtle sensation of unreality; as if I were talking to some quaint character from a book. Well—it takes many sorts to make a world, and if such a person as Chefalo were missing from my own world, I should be a much less experienced man.

Chefalo has had enormous luck in one respect. He has a wife who has proved a long and faithful companion through years of hard work and sometimes poverty. Madame Chefalo is a delightful woman, as fresh and as gentle and as unassuming as when she first came to England as "Palermo" of "Chefalo and Palermo" in the early years of the present century. In those early days, the pair worked in pretty but very small acts, introducing flowers and silks in the traditional Continental style. They met with a certain amount of success in America, and although they were well received on this side, there was nothing in their performance to cause a sensation in magic. Not long afterwards Chefalo told me he was contemplating a world tour, and asked me to provide him with some new illusions to the value of £10. I did what I could for him, and he left England with his wife, determined to make a name or die in the attempt. As his profits slowly accumulated, he added bigger and better illusions to his programme; and there was a touch of almost genius in his idea to include midget assistants in his act. This may seem a trivial point to the unexperienced magician, but it was a novelty, something that had never been done before, and it immediately attracted attention. Time and experience brought further progress, and to-day Chefalo has one of the most attractive magical acts in the world.

In the little Italian village where he was born, Chefalo is regarded as something of a national hero. He takes a holiday





there every year, and his return is always acclaimed by a procession and a frenzy of flag-waving that Mussolini himself might envy. He takes this tribute philosophically enough, unique though it must be. With the exception of Houdini, there has been no other magician who could arouse a public enthusiasm of this description. And because of that, one is forced to recognize that there is really much of greatness in Chefalo's character. He is, I think, the perfect blend of Italian artistry with the astuteness of the American business man.

**C**HEFALO'S *Umbrella Trick*. This version of the umbrella trick is so different from the one known to most conjurers that it is practically a new trick. The usual plan is to cause some handkerchiefs (belonging to the performer) to change places with the cover of an umbrella, the handkerchiefs being shown attached to the end of the ribs of the umbrella. The next stage of the trick is, to my mind, an anti-climax, for instead of leaving well alone the conjurer goes on to make the handkerchiefs and umbrella-cover again change places, when the cover is once more seen on the umbrella and the handkerchiefs have returned to their original place. Chefalo does not make that mistake; he is wisely content with one good effect, and he has worked it up to such a pitch of perfection that, to an ordinary audience it seems that the impossible has happened.

Chefalo uses half a dozen handkerchiefs borrowed from the audience, and he does not use any confederates. Further, he shows a perfectly sound umbrella to a girl from the audience (whom he has induced to come on the stage to help him) and this girl rolls up the genuine umbrella and hands it to the performer. Yet, although everything seems to the audience to be perfectly fair, square, and above board, the change takes place.

The performer, having borrowed the handkerchiefs, places them in a small box on a table and puts on the lid. He then shows the girl the umbrella, opens it, and invites the girl to roll it up and put it in its case. The umbrella is laid on a chair.

In due course the magician goes to the box and takes off the lid. He pretends to be very surprised to find the cover of the umbrella in the box. He then hands the girl the umbrella; she takes off the case, unrolls the umbrella, and—there are the borrowed handkerchiefs hanging on the ends of the ribs.

Now for the working. The box is fitted with an inner lining, and it is in this inner lining that the borrowed handkerchiefs are placed. The box is bottomless. When the handkerchiefs have been placed in it the inner lining drops down through a tube passing through the stage (this tube is, of course, concealed behind the little table). The lid of the box is like the lid of a dove pan and a duplicate of the cover of the umbrella is placed in it. This was designed by Chefalo, so that when the lid was removed the audience would at first feel convinced that the handkerchiefs were still there—a very subtle touch.

Directly the handkerchiefs are passed below the stage the assistant waiting for them ties them on to the ribs of a duplicate umbrella, rolls it up, and puts it in a case.

After the girl has rolled up the umbrella seen by the audience the performer asks her to put it in its case and he stands behind the girl's chair. Immediately behind the chair is a small trap. The illusionist takes the umbrella with one hand and gets hold of the duplicate umbrella, which is being pushed up through the trap in the stage, with the other hand. For a second the umbrella is out of sight of the audience—that is to say, while the performer is dropping the umbrella which the audience have seen through the trap and pulling up the duplicate. The exchange is done so quickly and naturally that not one magician in a hundred would notice it; a person who was without any knowledge of magic would never even think of it.

The performer puts the umbrella on a chair for a moment while he goes over to the box. Taking off the lid the magician pretends to be a little surprised, for the handkerchiefs are apparently still there; of course the performer and the audience are really looking at the white border of the umbrella-cover. In

due course the performer takes out the cover, shows it, and then hands the umbrella to the girl who opens it, displaying the borrowed handkerchiefs tied to the bare ribs. The applause and the laughs follow.

It will be seen that Chefalo gets all the fun there is to be had out of this trick and, in addition, makes it fifty times more puzzling than it usually is; in short, he makes a real trick of it.

*Divination Miracle.* The title is the one which the inventor has given to the trick, and when the reader has made himself thoroughly acquainted with the working of the effect I feel sure he will agree that the title is well deserved; to an audience this thought-reading experiment must appear to be almost miraculous. Here is the effect:

The performer brings forward two or three books and asks someone in the audience to choose one. The books may be freely examined, for they are not prepared in any way for the trick. Another member of the audience is asked to come up to the conjurer's table and assist in the next part of the experiment.

The magician shows thirty cards with numbers on them; these he deals out in ten heaps, with three cards in each heap. Before asking the assistant from the audience to choose which heap shall be used in the experiment the performer explains that the number on the top card will be used to indicate the page in the book which is to be used in the experiment; the number on the second card will indicate the line to be used, and the number on the last card the word in that line.

The assistant from the audience is then asked to choose one of the ten packets of cards, and he has a perfectly free choice. He is then invited to call out the three numbers. The illusionist asks the person who is holding the book to turn to the page indicated by the first number, the line indicated by the second number, and the word in that line indicated by the last number. The person is asked to think of that word and to dismiss all other thoughts from his mind. The performer asks his assistant

if she is able to "read" the word of which the person holding the book is thinking, and the lady immediately says what the word is.

The trick can be repeated two or three times; in fact, it could be done ten times—ten being the number of heaps of cards—but it is not advisable to do it more than twice.

Before disclosing the working of the trick I would ask the reader to bear in mind that the trick can be done anywhere—on the stage or in the drawing-room, that the magician has nothing to do except to deal out the cards in ten heaps, that the lady assistant may be blindfolded, and that the books and the cards may be freely examined before and after the trick.

The performer and his assistant arrange the trick beforehand. The assistant has to remember ten words in their right order, from number one to number ten. To make the task easy the magician and his assistant use a key word with ten letters in it.

Take, for example, the key word "Germanicus". G, being the first letter, stands for 1, but, for a reason which will be understood presently, page 1 may not be convenient for the trick. The performer and his assistant therefore decide that any number of which the unit figure is 1 will answer their purpose—1, 11, 21, 31, etc.

Read through page 11 of the book to be used in the trick until you find a word beginning with G, the first letter of the key word. The inventor of the trick gives an example when a certain book on card games is used. On page 11 is the word "Game"; it is on the first line and is the fifth word of that line. Therefore the performer writes down on three cards the figures 11, 1, 5.

The second letter in the key word "Germanicus" is "e". The performer goes through the pages 2, 12, 22, 32, etc., for a word beginning with "e". On page 32, line 11, 6th word will be found Edelst, and so the performer writes on three cards the figures 32, 11, 6.

The remaining eight words are determined in the same way, with the result that the performer and his assistant at length prepare the following table:

			Page.	Line.	Word.
G.	Game	...	11	1	5
E.	Edelst	...	32	11	6
R.	Right	...	23	4	2
M.	Making	...	44	12	7
A.	Advantage	...	15	9	5
N.	Nothing	...	26	23	6
I.	Imagine	...	27	5	1
C.	Communication	...	8	10	4
U.	Usual	...	19	30	1
S.	Strength	...	40	14	2

When the performer has written these figures on the thirty cards he places them on the table, face upwards, in the following order:—

2, 1, 4, 1, 6, 5, 7, 2, 6, 5 (these are the “word” figures), 14, 30, 10, 5, 23, 9, 12, 4, 11, 1 (these are the “line” figures), 40, 19, 8, 27, 26, 15, 14, 23, 32, 11 (these are the “page” figures).

The magician now turns over the pack (the figures being downwards), so that he has 2 at the top and 11 at the bottom. It is as well to put an elastic band round the cards because, of course, there must not be any risk of the order being disturbed. Now, when the performer does the trick he deals out ten cards in a row; these are the “word” cards; the next ten, “line” cards, are dealt out on the top of the first ten, and lastly the “page” cards. In each heap the top card is to indicate the number of the page to be used in the experiment, the middle card the line and the last card the word in the line.

It will be seen that when the trick is being presented the assistant does not have to pay any attention to the second and third figures read out. All she has to do is to remember the unit figure of the first number; then she mentally runs through the letters in the key word, and then she has the first letter of the word she is remembering. In this way her task is made quite easy.

That is the working of the trick if one book is used. If the audience are to have the choice of two or three books

then more key words and letters will have to be prepared in the same way and remembered by the assistant. The use of key words helps the assistant, of course. If two books are used it is advisable to choose the first ten words from the first fifty pages in the first book, and the other ten words from the last fifty pages in the second book.

The only weak point in the trick (to my mind) is the fact that the cards are not shuffled before they are dealt out into ten heaps. In my opinion the trick would be even more mystifying than it is to an audience if the performer began by showing the numbered cards and asking someone to shuffle them. When the performer was handing out the books and asking the audience to look through them and choose one, he would have more than one opportunity of changing the pack of shuffled cards for the pack arranged in the right order.

This is only a suggestion of my own. The inventor tells me that he has worked the trick for the past six years in the way I have described and has never known anyone to get near the secret, so possibly my suggestion is worthless!

**T***HE Magic Ball.* Here we have a trick with a very subtle secret; I imagine that even magicians of experience will have to think twice before they get on the track of it, and even then it is possible that some will get on to the wrong track!

On the conjurer's table is a small slab of wood; one end has the word "yes" painted on it; in the centre is a note of interrogation; at the other end is the word "No".

Two little brass rods—one at each end of the slab—support two large wooden discs, which are connected by two brass rods. These rods are a few inches apart, so that a large ball can rest upon them.

Members of the audience can be invited to come on the stage and assist in the performance of this trick. The ball is given out for examination, and anyone can place it on the two rods.

The performer then addresses the ball: "Can you hear me?" The ball immediately rolls to the end marked "yes".

"You moved rather slowly," says the magician. "You're not sulky this evening, are you?" The ball immediately rolls to the other end of the apparatus.

"That's all right," says the performer. "I take it that you won't mind if the audience ask you a few questions?"

The ball rolls smartly to the other end of the apparatus. The conjurer then invites the audience to put some questions to the ball, and the ball replies to them by rolling to the ends of the two rods or, if the question is too difficult, rolling to the centre. At any time during the trick the ball can be removed and given out for examination.

The whole secret is—air pressure. The apparatus is on a little tripod table, but the two back legs of the table are not quite as innocent as they look, because they are hollow, and fitted to them are rubber tubes which are carried out to the hidden assistant. The tubes in the legs of the table are carried up through the centre pedestal of the table and then to the two rods which support the wooden discs. These discs are ornamented—so that the audience may not notice the hole in the centre of each disc.

The assistant knows which tube to blow down when the ball is to travel to "yes" and which to use when the ball is to travel to the other end of the apparatus. By blowing down both tubes at once the assistant can get the ball to go to the centre and remain there.

In good hands this should be a very effective trick.

**S**HOOTING *Through a Woman*. For this sensational feat the performer uses a cross-bow and two arrows. To prove that the bow works in the usual way the performer fires an arrow at the target on the stage. The lady then steps in front of the target and the magician fires another arrow which apparently passes right through the lady and fixes itself into the target.

Is it necessary to explain that the illusionist does not do what he appears to do? The second arrow is retained in the cross-bow; this arrow is telescopic; even the head folds up.

The arrow which appears to pass through the lady is really shot from her belt, worn under the dress. A metal plate, with a little spring gun, is attached to the belt.

## CHAPTER IX

### TRICKS OF ESCAPE

WHEN one thinks of "escape artists"—as they are known in the language of the music-hall profession—one naturally thinks first of Houdini who, in his own particular line, was quite unapproachable. He had all the qualities that go to the making of a perfect performer of this kind—a fine physique, a splendid constitution, a real interest in his work (apart from the money-making side of it), any amount of self-confidence and, last but not least, unlimited courage.

I know that many people thought that some of Houdini's most sensational feats—especially those which he gave in public, free, gratis and for nothing, for advertising purposes—were very clever "fakes". Nothing of the kind. Houdini knew quite well that he often had to take his life in his hands and that the slightest hitch would mean—death. This was especially true in the case of tests conducted under water. When a man allows himself to be tied up in a strait-jacket and dropped into a river he knows quite well that if he does not work quickly and well there is going to be only one sequel to the exhibition—an inquest.

The public were quick to see the dangers to which Houdini exposed himself. Some people might say that at times his courage amounted almost to foolhardiness, but the public did not think so; they saw in Houdini a man who courted danger and laughed when it came his way, a man without fear, a man with an iron nerve. I believe that a great deal of Houdini's enormous popularity with the general public was due entirely to his great bravery; his uncanny cleverness in freeing himself from bonds from which escape seemed quite impossible was, I think, a secondary attraction to the general public. The fact that the man took big risks, out of sheer

devilment, was what the public recognized, and they showed their appreciation of this brave man at the box office—which, after all, was the way in which Houdini wanted them to show it!

He had a very hard fight to success when he was a young man and when fame came his way he had to keep himself in fighting form always, in order to retain it. No late hours, no smoking, no drinking. He was always training, for he knew quite well that only by keeping himself physically fit and mentally fit would he be able to keep himself securely at the top of the tree. It must be remembered that every time Houdini stepped on to the stage for his evening's performance he never knew what he was going to be up against before he had finished. He often met with "awkward" people—men who considered that he was fair game, men who intended to spoil his show if they possibly could. And so Houdini often found himself in a very tight corner, but he always managed to get free.

If I were asked if Houdini's place will be filled I should feel inclined to say that it has already been filled by a very fine artist from Australia—Murray. It is not a good stage name, but I fancy that in a year or two the owner of it will find that after all, with the general public, a name is of no consequence. Everyone took it for granted that the name "Houdini" was not that great artist's real name, that the man had merely given himself a name which the public would easily remember. To do that is easy enough. Murray is content with his own name, and I think he will have good reason to be well satisfied with it.

Murray has already done all the escape tricks that Houdini performed and a few others of his own invention. He has travelled all over the world with his show and has performed to every kind of audience imaginable. He is a very brave man, and so has given many of the sensational feats which helped to make Houdini famous. Murray, clad in a strait-jacket, has been suspended in mid-air by a chain attached to a crane; tied up with any quantity of manacles—leg-irons, handcuffs, etc. etc.—has dived into the sea and freed himself



MURRAY  
the Australian esca



under those very difficult conditions. One cannot suggest any kind of sensational feat to Murray; he has performed every one and is always trying to go one better than his own record.

One of his most sensational escapes—though it may not appear so to the general public—is from a safe which can be examined. There is very little room in that safe for the performer; hence the difficulty of escaping. Murray knows quite well that if he is not out of that safe by the right time he will never be called upon to perform again, for the simple reason that he will not be alive! Murray thoroughly enjoys presenting that experiment; he revels in taking a risk. Personally, though I am a poor man, and though I know the wonderful secret of the escape from the locked safe, I do not think any money would tempt me to take Murray's place in it for one evening unless I was sure that he was outside, ready to let me out if I did not appear at the right time. Indeed, I am not sure that I should like to perform a certain "escape illusion" of my own invention—for the simple reason that I am by no means sure that I could present it quickly enough.

The whole effect in some of these escapes is lost unless they are presented quickly, and the reason for that has been well worked out. The apparatus is first examined by the audience, who are thoroughly convinced that it is genuine in every detail (and in one sense it usually is). With this apparatus the performer is tied up in some way or imprisoned. If he frees himself quickly the audience argue the matter over to themselves in this way. They say: "Well, the secret must be simple; otherwise he could not have got out so quickly and yet we examined the thing thoroughly." So the performer reaps a double effect from his show.

The sole "prop" in my escape illusion is an iron circular cage, large enough for a man to get in it when he is crouching down a little. The cage can be thoroughly examined by the audience. There is a heavy iron ring at the top, into which the ends of the bars are securely fixed, and another similar ring at the base. The top and bottom of the cage have two sets of bars—one set running across the other. There does

not seem to be any room for trickery in the apparatus; it is just an open cage. After it has been examined by the audience it is placed on a small platform raised from the stage. The performer gets inside the cage; the door is closed and padlocked. There is no trick about the padlock; anyone in the audience can bring his own padlock if he wishes to do so and the performer will use it. The cage is then screened for about half a minute. The performer is then out of the cage and it can be examined again. If he wishes to heighten the effect—though I am vain enough to think that it is quite good enough as it is!—he can have himself handcuffed with genuine handcuffs before he enters the cage.

The secret is very simple. The "bars" connecting the top circle of iron with the base are really hollow tubes fixed into the base of the cage. Solid bars, corresponding in position to the position of these tubes, are fixed in the top circle of iron which is then dropped down over the base. The bars go into the tubes and the tubes appear to be ordinary solid iron bars. The top iron circle, with all the solid bars attached to it, is very heavy.

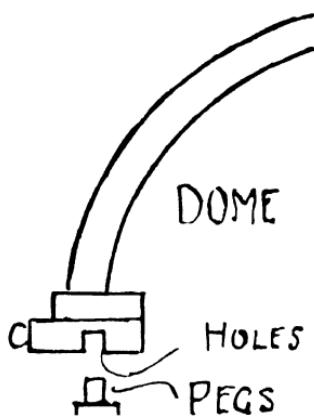
Now, when the cage is shown to the audience it is padlocked. Even if a man tries to raise the top of the cage with both hands he finds that it is apparently secure—thanks to the weight of it. When the door is unfastened it is quite impossible for any man to raise the top by putting his hands inside the cage and pushing upwards. The performer himself does not try to escape in that way. He escapes by heaving upwards with his shoulders, and strong muscular shoulders are needed for the job. The hands are not used until the top is nearly clear of the base. Then the top is lifted clear for a moment while the performer steps out, and then all he has to do is to drop the top back into position and make as little noise as possible over the job. The orchestra see to that! It is quite a good effect, but I am not physically strong enough to work it as it should be worked—very quickly.

There is a trick cage—but, perhaps, I had better say that there was, because I do not think that a good escape artist would use the cage I have in mind—which was worked very

## TRICKS OF ESCAPE



THE PRISONER  
IN THE IRON CAGE



W.

OF CAGE

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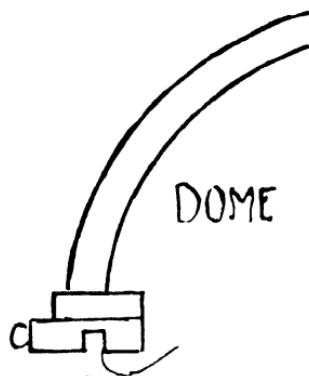
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THE PRISONER  
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simply, but it could not be submitted to a searching examination. The performer, or one of his assistants, had to be with the cage all the time and carefully guard the "danger" spot without appearing to do anything of the kind.

In this case the bars were fairly wide apart, but nothing like wide enough to allow a man to pass through them. And the secret? One "bar" was really a rod of solid rubber. All that the performer had to do was to pull it on one side—and even that was not a job for a man with weak hands—and step out. I once heard of an escape artist who was not very popular with his assistants and one day after the great man—as he thought he was; the public were not so sure about it—had made himself unusually objectionable to his assistants at a rehearsal, they planned a big revenge. They tossed up to see whether they should give the show away that evening by allowing a member of the audience to get hold of the rubber bar or whether they should secretly take the rubber bar away altogether and fix a solid iron one in its place. They decided on the latter course, and they looked forward with glee to seeing the big man make a fool of himself in front of an audience. What was to happen to them after this little exhibition had not been considered; their one thought was to get "their own back" on their objectionable boss.

Unfortunately, their little scheme did not develop according to plan, for the big man came in when the rubber bar had been taken out of the cage. In less than five minutes two assistants to an escape artist were out of a job. And that evening two stage-hands appeared with the big man as his assistants; their uniforms did not fit them at all well, but they did not mind, for they knew that there would be more money for beer on Saturday.

A reader who wants to mystify his friends with an "escape" which really has a marvellous effect, but which is quite easy, should try "the sack trick". The sack can be the real thing or it can be made of any material as long as it is large enough for a man to conceal himself in it. The sack is fitted with draw-strings so that the mouth can be pulled in tightly by an assistant after the performer has got in the sack. The

assistant ties a genuine knot on the top of the sack, and any members of the audience who want to take a hand in the game can go on tying knots and can finish off the job properly by putting sealing-wax on the top of them.

A screen is put in front of the performer, and in less than a minute he walks away from it with the sack, still tied and sealed, over his arm. The sack can be examined both before and after the performance by anyone.

The assistant must be in the secret. The sack is spread out on the floor and the performer steps into it. The assistant then pulls the sack up over the performer's head. While this is being done the performer puts his fingers under the hem of the sack, draws down the string into a big loop and hangs on to it. The draw-strings are really much longer than they—apparently—need be, but no one notices that little detail.

It will be seen that when the assistant draws the strings tightly at the top of the mouth of the sack, the performer, still holding on to his loop, really has all the "slack", as it is called, he wants. The assistant must remember not to bind the strings round the top of the sack—I have seen that done in a friend's drawing-room, and there was no performance that evening. The strings are just drawn up tightly and a genuine knot is tied. After that, anyone can tie knots, because no one will want to look inside the sack at that point.

Directly the performer is hidden he lets go of the loop of string he has been holding and he can then push the mouth of the sack open and get out. Then he cuts off the slack, ties the two ends of the string together and tucks the knot inside the sack, which then has exactly the same appearance as it had when the audience last saw it. The length of the draw-strings has been reduced, but that detail is never noticed. The trick is quite easy, and anyone can do it with five minutes' practice. The performer will find that if he draws the loop down to the bottom of his waistcoat he will have no difficulty in escaping from the tied sack.

Another way, as the cookery books say. The following method is in some ways better than the first and in other ways

not so good. I prefer the one already given. Still, an amateur who is going to do the same trick to the same audience more than once should have two strings to his bow—more if possible!

In this case the sack should be made of very thin material because there have to be two sacks just alike and the performer must have one concealed on him; he can easily hide it at the back of his coat (in the small of his back) by keeping his coat buttoned.

The other sack, which has no draw-strings, is given out for examination; there is no "trick" about it. When it is returned to him he starts to get into it and the assistant draws it up slowly—to give the performer time to do what he has to do. He gets hold of the sack from under his coat, holds it by the mouth, and lets the rest of it drop into the sack in which he is standing. The assistant takes hold of the mouth of the hidden sack and raises it above the mouth of the sack which the audience can see. While doing this the assistant must have the top of the "visible" sack gathered up and hidden by one of her hands—to hide the fact that there are two sacks. When the mouth of the hidden sack is about a foot higher than the other the assistant binds a big handkerchief right round the mouth of the "visible" sack and ties two or three knots. The audience see the mouth of the hidden sack above the handkerchief, and they think that the sack has been fairly tied up with the handkerchief. When the performer is hidden by the screen he merely pulls down the sack in which he has been standing—it comes away from the handkerchief easily—folds it up, conceals it under his coat, and comes forward with the other sack tied round the mouth with the handkerchief.

There is a third method of doing the trick. In this case the bottom of the sack which is shown to the audience is sewn with one long thread, "in and out", right across it, but there are any number of dummy stitches, which do not go right through both sides of the sack. The long thread has a big knot at one end. When the performer is hidden he gets hold of the big knot, draws away the thread, and the bottom of the sack is open. He then holds the sack up, takes a

duplicate sack, tied and sealed, from under his coat and tosses it out to the audience. The other sack is hidden under the performer's coat.

The "halter tie" is another good escape for amateurs, because the effect is marvellous and the method of bringing it about is easy.

The performer asks for the assistance of two members of the audience, and when they come up he hands them two long pieces of soft cord. The performer asks the assistants to pull on the ends of the cord to prove that they are genuine.

The assistants are asked to stand, one on one side of the stage and one on the other with the performer in the middle. The performer holds the two cords by the centre and places them at the back of his neck; the ends of the cord are thrown out to the two assistants. The performer then asks the assistants to hand him one cord apiece; they can choose which cord they give up. The performer takes the two ends and ties a knot in front of his neck and tosses the two ends of the cord back to the assistants. The performer draws the knot close against his throat and calls attention to it; if he can convince the audience that cord is tied so tightly that it is nearly cutting into his skin so much the better!

The performer asks his assistants to pull tightly on the cords they are holding when he shouts "Go!" He begs them not to pull until he gives the signal; "if you do," he says, "the cord may cut right through my neck and my head will then fall off with a sickening thud."

At this point I ask the reader to remember just what has happened up to now. Both cords are behind the performer's neck and one cord is tied tightly in front of his throat. Directly he gives the signal to his assistant he steps back quickly, and the audience see the two assistants holding the two cords between them; the cords have apparently passed right through the performer's neck and the knot has disappeared.

And yet the trick is "dead easy". The best way to explain it is to ask the reader to imagine that one cord is red and the other blue, but as a matter of fact the two cords should be exactly alike in every detail. It is as well to have the four

ends bound with cotton to prevent them from fraying and to make all four ends look alike; otherwise, a very inquisitive assistant may tumble to the secret.

The preliminary part of the trick is straightforward, and the cords are genuine. After they have been examined the performer holds them together in the centre and starts to talk to his assistants, showing them where he wishes them to stand on the stage. If the performer can work in a little joke at this point so much the better, because there is nothing better than a laugh to distract the attention of the audience at a critical point in a trick. When one of the assistants has taken up his position on the stage the performer can say: "Thanks very much; you do what you're asked to do very quickly. Had some practice, perhaps? Married? Of course, I understand."

I am not saying that that is a brilliant joke, but it will generally answer the purpose of getting the audience to smile. The great thing to remember is that the audience must not be allowed to see what the performer is really doing at this part of the trick. He is secretly dividing the two cords, by looping them in the centre and then holding the two loops together. Thus, if the cords were red and blue, when the performer has arranged them as they must be arranged for the trick, they still appear to the audience to be held in the middle, but the performer is really holding the two loops together and, unknown to the audience, the two cords on his left are both red and the other two both blue. I think that will make the explanation of the trick quite clear.

Directly the performer puts the cords behind his neck he tucks the two loops into his collar and holds them securely there by pressing his neck against the collar. The ends of the cords are then thrown out to the two assistants, and the performer steps back two paces, because the assistants must not be allowed to get a glimpse of the back of the performer.

Now, one assistant is holding the two ends of the red cord and the other assistant has the two ends of the blue cord. Therefore, when the performer says to the assistants: "Give me one cord, please, whichever you like" it does not matter which ends are given to him. The performer takes the two

ends and ties a single knot in the centre and brings it close up to his throat. He then tosses the two ends back to the assistants, but each now holds a blue cord and a red cord. The performer must remember to tie a single knot; any other kind of knot will be his undoing!

To get free the performer brings his head back and forward, releasing the cords from his collar. The trick then works itself, for he is free and the two cords are in front of him, and the ends are being held by the assistants. It will be found that one cord is twisted once round the other, but no one ever notices that; the cords have apparently passed through the performer's neck and the knot has disappeared.

The best way to understand the trick is to try it out on a table with a couple of neckties of different colours. The reader will then see at once exactly what happens in the trick. The effect to the audience is very good.

But on no account should the trick be performed to an audience until it has been rehearsed. That is the fault of so many amateur magicians. If a trick is easy they think they need not bother about any rehearsals. The reader should practise dividing the two cords in the centre while he is talking, so that he does not have to think of what he is doing. He should also practise tucking the two loops down his neck and holding them by pressure against his collar. That move must be done quickly, neatly, without any fumbling. Let the reader see how long it takes him to put the two cords behind his neck in a genuine way—without first dividing them; he will find that it does not take a second. He should not spend any more time in getting the two loops into position.

One of the cords that has been used in the above trick can be brought into service again for another pretty "escape".

The performer holds his two wrists together and asks someone to bind them with a handkerchief. He asks that the handkerchief may be tied very tightly; the number of knots is immaterial. Being a good showman the performer shows the knots to the audience. He then asks an assistant to drop one end of the cord behind the handkerchief and to pull on it until the two ends of the cord are level. The assistant is

then instructed to pull on the cords and the performer pretends that the pull is so strong that he is nearly pulled over. Anyhow, he follows his assistant round the stage, the assistant pulling on the cords all the time. As the performer's wrists are securely tied he appears to be quite helpless, and if he acts well he will give the audience the impression that he is merely being pulled about the stage against his will.

Suddenly the performer gives his two hands an upward jerk and he is free. His assistant is left holding the two ends of the cord and the performer's wrists are still tightly bound. Therefore, the cord must have passed right through the performer's arm or through the tightly-tied handkerchief!

This is what really happens. The performer has a reason for moving about the stage. He would find it rather difficult to do the trick neatly if he were standing still. When he finds himself with his left side facing the audience the performer bends down the second finger of his right hand as far as it will go—the longer the finger the easier the trick—and gets hold of the cord which is being pulled up close against the tied handkerchief. The performer pulls on the cord—the left hand conceals this movement—and puts his right hand through the loop. Now, if he moves his hand upwards he will find that the loop, now at the back of the hand, passes through and under the handkerchief tied round his wrist, and he is free. The trick is perfectly easy, but of course it requires a little practice.

Another good escape, suitable for drawing-room performance, is done with the performer's coat.

Someone is asked to tie a string round one of the buttons of the coat and to put the string through the buttonhole and tie tightly. The knot is then to be sealed. Other buttons and buttonholes are treated in the same way.

The performer then says that he does not propose to give the trick away if he can help it, and he will want a screen in front of him. This is where the assistant comes in. An assistant is needed for the trick, but to get the utmost effect from it the performer should do it apparently "on his own". The assistant holds the screen and talks to the performer for

a moment asking him how long he will be, if the screen is in the right place, does he want any assistance, etc. etc. Anything to gain a little time. This is what is really happening while the conversation—which need not last a minute—is going on.

The performer bends down. The assistant gets hold of the bottom of the coat at the back and pulls it off. The performer then says, so that the audience shall hear him: "Thanks. The screen and the light are quite all right, and now if you will make yourself scarce for a moment I will try to do the trick." The performer must convey the impression that he is doing the trick himself.

When the coat is pulled off it is naturally inside out. When the assistant has disappeared the performer quickly turns the coat back again and then, if he is wise, he takes a small mirror from his pocket and smooths his hair, which was probably ruffled when the coat was pulled off. Then he can groan and pretend to be in difficulties for a few moments. When he is quite cool, calm and collected he steps out with the coat on his arm, and, of course, anyone can examine the knots and the seals.

The performer will probably be asked by his friends to get back into the coat again, but he should decline the invitation. The trick can easily be done, but "let well alone" is a very good motto for an amateur magician.



## CHAPTER X

### THE FLOTSAM AND JETSAM OF MAGIC

IS there any kind of entertainment more popular with any audience than that given by a good magician? I do not know of one, and I have long since been convinced that there is not one. The man who can do a few tricks well can amuse an audience anywhere, at any time, under any conditions. It is not even necessary for the magician to know the language of the people he is entertaining. With signs he can easily make them understand what he is apparently doing, but even signs are not always necessary; some of the best tricks in the world "speak for themselves" and do not need one word of explanation on the part of the performer. I admit, however, that the magician who aims at giving private performances should be able to talk well and to amuse an audience. A magician's "patter" is to him what an accompaniment is to a singer.

The magician who really knows his job is always ready to perform and, if he is not going to perform in public, he need not carry a lot of apparatus about with him. Max Malini, for instance, one of America's cleverest magicians—which is saying a good deal, for magic is cultivated in America—travels round the world again and again with just a few pieces of cord, some coins, and a pack of cards in his luggage. Very often he will not trouble to take a pack of cards with him when he is going to entertain people in a drawing-room, for he knows that he will be asked to use the cards provided by the host. He is not particular about the cards he uses. Amateurs are generally very particular!

Malini, in common with most magicians of his class, relies almost entirely on sleight of hand for his tricks. He knows, of course, that there are many excellent tricks which are quite

easy and do not call for much practice, but then he also knows that he will frequently be called upon to entertain amateur conjurers who expect to see him doing difficult tricks. I may add that only a magician can really appreciate such tricks; to the general public, who know little or nothing of magic, a good trick is a good trick. They are not concerned with the way in which it is done. The way may be difficult or easy; the effect of the trick upon them when they see it performed is all that matters to them.

This is a point that the average amateur performer ignores. He imagines—quite wrongly—that he cannot be a real magician unless he can do very difficult tricks, and so he spends much time and labour in trying to learn such tricks. In nearly every case the amateur would create a much better impression with his audiences if he were content with tricks that do not call for endless practice—as some sleight of hand tricks do.

Still, there is this to be said for a trick performed by pure sleight of hand, that is to say, without the assistance of any kind of apparatus, hidden or otherwise. (Very often a trick which appears to the audience to be one of pure sleight of hand is nothing of the kind; the magician really does the trick with the aid of a little piece of apparatus which the audience do not see.) A trick performed by pure sleight of hand is always a “safe” trick—that is, of course, if the performer is competent. When a performer depends on any kind of apparatus, hidden or otherwise, he is at the mercy of that apparatus. If it “goes wrong” there is no trick. Of course good apparatus does not easily get out of order, but a magician is often careless with his props. A spring may have got weakened with constant use, or a part may be on the verge of breakdown from the same cause, and the magician does not discover what is the matter until he finds that everything is the matter! Every sleight of hand magician makes slips occasionally, but those slips are not fatal; the sleight of hand magician can cover up his faults and bring any trick to some kind of conclusion—if not the right one.

I always advise an amateur to begin with simple tricks and then to go on to tricks which appear to be done with

sleight of hand but which are really done with the aid of "little things" not seen by the audience.

Here, for example, is a simple little card trick, but since the secret of it is subtle the effect of the trick is usually very good. What is more, the clumsiest magician in the world cannot make a mistake with it!

The performer writes something on a slip of paper, folds the paper, and puts it on the table. He then makes two little packets of cards on the table and asks someone to point to one of the packets. When this has been done the person is asked to read what the conjurer wrote on the slip of paper before he began the trick. (He impresses that fact on the person assisting him.) The slip is read. The conjurer merely prophesied that one of the two packets of cards would be chosen, and he at once proceeds to show that his prophesy has come true.

This is what happens. The conjurer writes on the slip: "You will choose the six packet". He then puts any six cards in a little packet on the table; of course he takes care that no one is able to count how many cards there are in that packet. In the other packet he puts the four "sixes" from the pack. When the slip is read he interprets it in the way necessary for the trick. If the person has chosen the packet with the four sixes in it the magician asks that the cards may be turned over. "There you are," says he, "I knew you would take that packet." At the same moment he puts the other packet back on the pack. If the packet with six cards in it has been chosen the conjurer spreads out the cards and calls attention to the fact that there are six cards in the packet. He also shows that there are only four cards in the other packet, but of course he does not show the faces of the cards! Oh no! He slips them back in the pack at once and shuffles the pack, so that no one will be able to locate them. I have known very intelligent people to be completely "stumped" with this simple little trick.

Here is another, also very easy, and with a very little care it cannot go wrong.

At the beginning of the trick the performer can stand right

in the centre of his audience, and so the trick is a very good one when a man is called upon to perform at very close quarters.

The magician asks some person on his left to take about half the cards from a pack. The other half is put on one side. The performer takes the half which has been chosen and asks some person on his right to take any card and to look at it and remember it. He then returns the rest of the cards to the person on the left who is helping in the trick. Taking the single card from the person holding it the magician walks across to the other assistant and replaces the card anywhere among the others. The person is then asked to shuffle the cards.

The magician reminds the audience that the cards have been out of his hands and therefore he cannot possibly know what card was taken or where it is, in what position it is among the others. (And this is true.) Taking the cards in his hand the magician says that he will hold them behind his back, so that he cannot get a glimpse of one of them. He is then going to deal them out slowly with their faces to the audience, and he asks the person who took a card to think of the word "Mine!" when he—or she—sees the chosen card.

The magician suits the action to the words and when he comes to a certain card he stops and says to the person who took the card. "You are thinking of the word 'Mine' because that is your card. Am I right?" And—behold—the magician is right.

To make the explanation, which is coming, quite clear, I suggest that the learner should first put a card on the table and imagine that it is marked with A and B at the top corners and C and D on the two lower corners.

Now, when the magician takes the card from the person who has chosen it he quietly digs his thumb-nail into the corner D, the lower right-hand corner. Just before he is about to place the card among the others held by the person on his left the conjurer takes the card in his left hand and digs his thumb nail into the corner A, the top left-hand corner.



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Those two marks with the thumb-nail make two little bumps on the face of the card, but they are practically invisible. The object of having the card marked exactly in the way I have described is this. If the person holding the cards should happen to drop them and get them all mixed up the trick can go on just the same because, in whatever position the chosen card is there must be a little bump on the right-hand lower corner. When the magician has got the cards behind his back he merely deals them out slowly until he feels a little bump on a card and he knows that that is the chosen card.

The only possible mistake that can be made with that trick is marking the card in the wrong corners.

Another—also easy. The conjurer shuffles the pack, divides it into two fairly equal portions and gives one to a member of the audience.

“When my back is turned,” says the magician, “I should be glad if you would put a few cards—any cards—from your half on to the top of my half. Please do not put more than ten cards on mine; I’ll hold mine behind my back and then you’ll know that I can’t possibly see how many you put on the top.”

When this request has been complied with the magician asks that the cards in his hands—which are still behind his back—may be squared up neatly, so that when he brings the cards in front of him he cannot possibly see how many cards were added.

The magician, holding the cards in front of him, says to his assistant: “You didn’t give me more than ten cards, did you?” (This is an important detail because sometimes a “funny” man will try to spoil the trick.) Being assured on this point the magician counts off the top ten cards quickly by sliding them off the pack into his right hand; he does not deal them separately. Shuffling the little packet of cards for a moment the magician says to the person helping him: “You may have given me all these cards.” The assistant agrees. “Just think of the number of cards you gave me,” adds the magician. “Thank you. I know that you gave me ——.” He names the number, and it is always correct. The audience

think that the trick is over, but the conjurer goes on at once to the little packet of cards on the table. If the number was a five the magician asks a five card to show itself and his command is obeyed for as the packet reaches the table a five card turns over.

Now for the secret. The magician arranges matters beforehand by putting any ten cards arranged from the ten, nine, eight, etc. etc., to the ace on the top of the pack. He cuts the pack and keeps the top half himself. Now, a little thought will convince the learner that no matter how many cards, up to ten, are put on the magician's half of the pack, the eleventh card will give the key to the number. When the trick begins the tenth card from the top is an ace, but if the person helping in the trick decides to put only one card on the top of the magician's cards, then the eleventh card will be the ace; if two cards are secretly put on the eleventh card will be a two, and so on. This part of the trick works itself automatically.

When the magician counts off ten cards from the top of the pack and slides them into his hand he really slides off eleven cards and gets a glimpse of the eleventh, which tells him how many cards were put on his portion of the pack. In shuffling the little packet the magician is easily able to get the eleventh card to the top of it, and before dropping the packet on the table he pushes the top card forward a little; then, as the packet is dropped smartly on the table the top card turns over. And that's that.

There are many different tricks in which a piece of paper is torn into little pieces and is then made whole again. If the trick is done with a narrow strip of tissue paper the magician uses what is known as a "thumb tip"—a little thimble, shaped like the top of a thumb, and painted flesh colour; it is usually made of celluloid. A duplicate strip of tissue paper is pleated into folds and then packed away in the "thumb tip", which the magician puts over his thumb. When the magician exhibits the strip of paper in his hand the audience do not see the thumb tip because the magician keeps his thumb behind the strip of paper. This strip is then torn up into

little pieces which are folded neatly together and while he is moving his hands slightly—so that the audience shall not see what he is doing—the magician slides the whole duplicate strip out of the “thumb tip” and stuffs the torn pieces into it and then displays the duplicate strip. Finally, the magician tosses the strip of paper to the audience, but he takes care to keep his hands moving all the time and his thumb pointing towards the audience; when the thumb is held in that position the “thumb tip” cannot easily be seen.

A magician who does not care for that method can use a large sheet of tissue paper of any very dark colour—black paper is really the best for the purpose. The magician merely tears the paper into little pieces by first tearing it into two halves and then putting the two halves together, and so on, until he has a packet of small pieces in his hand. He screws these up into a ball, tosses it into the air, and then unrolls the ball, when the audience sees that the paper pieces have been joined together.

Here the secret is very simple, but the effect is good. Before beginning the trick the magician takes two large sheets of tissue paper and lays one on the top of the other. He lifts up one corner and puts in a dab of paste between the two sheets, about three inches from the corner. The two sheets are pressed together till the paste is dry. Then, taking care not to tear the sheet near the pasted spot, the magician screws it up into a ball. He can then show the other sheet to the audience; the ball of paper remains stuck to it. (No, the performer does *not* show that side to the audience!) To do the trick the performer merely has to tear the sheet into pieces and squash them together when, held close up to the ball made by the duplicate whole sheet the ball appears to be one. The duplicate sheet is unrolled and the little pieces remain in a ball behind it. It is advisable to damp the paper slightly before doing the trick.

A very good sequel to any trick in which a piece of paper is torn and mended again is performed in this way. The magician says he will show the audience how the trick was done and suggests that they will see the method clearly if he

does the trick "with this piece of ribbon". He holds up a piece of silk ribbon, about two yards long and two inches wide. Running his hand down the ribbon to the centre the magician holds it there for a moment while he folds the ribbon at that point. He draws up the loop so made and openly cuts it with a pair of scissors and the audience see the two ends.

The magician then adds that really all he has to do is to squeeze the ends together. When he does this he holds out the ribbon between his hands and shows that it has been mended; he then gives it to the audience so that they may find the "join"—if they can. But they never can!

Before doing the trick the magician prepared for it by cutting off a couple of inches and sewing the ends of the little piece together, making a little circle of ribbon. This circle was placed over one end of the ribbon and was hidden by the magician's hand when he first showed the ribbon to the audience. When running his hand down to the centre of the ribbon the magician included this little circle of ribbon, and so brought it to the centre. He then folded the ribbon at the centre and apparently brought up the loop at the top of the left hand. (The folded ribbon is naturally put in that hand because the magician is going to cut it, and so he wants his right hand free.) The loop which the audience see at the top of the left hand is really the little circle of ribbon.

The performer puts his right hand into his coat pocket to get the scissors. This gives him the opportunity of sticking his thumb into an empty "thumb tip" which he had in readiness in his pocket. The ribbon is cut; the performer takes care to show the ends. He then squeezes the ends together and at the same time works the little piece of ribbon into the thumb tip. It is a very effective little trick.

Here is a showy little trick with a couple of tumblers. The performer places a big silk handkerchief into one of the tumblers and hides it by dropping a cardboard cylinder over it. This tumbler is on the left hand side of the conjurer's table. An empty tumbler is shown, covered in the same way, and placed on the other side of the table.

Now comes a little patter. The conjurer begs his audi-

ence to remember that the tumbler with the handkerchief in it is on his left and the empty tumbler is on his right. He beseeches his audience to remember that simple fact, and he explains that once when he was doing the trick the audience forgot the position of the tumblers; at any rate, he adds, they insisted that the tumbler with the handkerchief in it was on the right of the table—the conjurer's right—and the empty glass on the left.

"And," says the magician, "just to humour them, I had to show them that they were—right." With that he raises the cylinder on his left and shows the glass empty; he uncovers the other glass, shows that it has the handkerchief in it, and takes it out. He has done the trick before the audience knew what he was going to do, and it is just as well to do a trick that way sometimes—for a change.

This is how the magician did the trick. The first glass had a lining of transparent celluloid—a glass within a glass. The other glass was provided with a similar lining, but before starting on the trick the conjurer put a handkerchief into the celluloid "lining" and hid it in the cylinder.

Now, perhaps the reader will see what happened. To show the glass into which he had put the handkerchief empty, the magician raised the cylinder with his thumb outside it and his fingers inside it; in this way he was able to draw out the celluloid lining from the glass and keep it hidden in the cylinder.

In covering the other glass the magician picked up the cylinder with his fingers inside it and so gripped the celluloid lining which dropped noiselessly into the glass. The trick is about as easy as falling off a chair.

A little trick with a wand and a handkerchief; the two things are first shown to the audience and the wand is banged on the table to prove that it is made of wood. The magician twists a small piece of newspaper into a conical-shaped bag and drops the handkerchief into it. He then stands the bag in a tumbler—to keep it upright. He makes another bag of paper, drops the wand into it, folds the top of the bag over, and stands the bag in another tumbler.

Wand on the left—handkerchief on the right. Go!

Breaking open the bag on his left the conjurer discovers the handkerchief; the wand has disappeared. He goes to the other paper bag, apparently expecting to find the wand there, but the bag is empty. The performer unwinds the paper and shows that it is just what it appears to be. The performer then explains that he tucked the wand up his sleeve; he puts his right hand under his coat and produces it—apparently from his left sleeve.

The paper with which the first bag is made is really a double sheet—that is to say, one sheet is laid over another and the two are pasted together, at the edge, on three sides. The paper thus forms a bag. When the magician is twisting the paper up into a conical-shaped bag he holds the paper with the open side at the top, and after he has made the bag he puts his hand inside and quietly separates the two sheets slightly. The handkerchief is then put in between the two sheets, and the top of the bag is folded down. Now, when the performer untwists that paper it appears to be a plain sheet of paper, but the handkerchief is hidden between the two sheets.

The magic wand is really a tube of stiff black paper with a duplicate handkerchief tucked down to the centre of it and with the ends closed by two plugs of wood, so that the wand can be banged on the table. The wand is dropped into a bag made of ordinary paper.

I have shown how the handkerchief was made to disappear. To cause its appearance—really the appearance of a duplicate handkerchief—in the bag in which the wand was placed the performer merely has to break the bag in the centre, draw out the handkerchief, and screw the paper into a ball. (He must not leave this about!)

The production of a solid wand from the left sleeve is simple enough. The performer extends his left arm and reaches under his coat, as though he were about to draw the wand from the sleeve, but as a matter of fact the wand is resting in the top left-hand waistcoat pocket. This pocket



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must be slightly deeper than an ordinary pocket. No further explanation needed!

A very puzzling trick, suitable for a stage, is done with a large celluloid ball. The ball has a hole through it. The performer begins by telling the audience that every schoolboy knows the trick of the obedient ball. A string is passed through a hole bored right through a small wooden ball, but the hole is not straight. Therefore when the performer, holding the string perpendicularly, wishes the ball not to fall he merely has to keep the string taut. He tells the ball to drop a few inches, and to make the ball obedient he lets the string become slack for a moment and then tightens it again.

All this from the performer by way of introduction to his trick. He gives the big ball out for examination and a long cord with it. Anyone is at liberty to thread the string through the ball, and to prove for himself that when the ball is threaded on the string the string goes straight through it; therefore, the ball will not stay suspended in the centre of the string when the string is tightened—as in the old schoolboy trick.

When everyone is satisfied that the ball has no preparation about it (and it has not) the performer takes it back to the stage. Now the ball, while it has been examined by the audience, has had a string passed through it, but somehow(?) the string has slipped out of the ball when the performer has been taking it back to the stage and, of course, he has to thread it on the string again. In order that he may do this easily he beckons to an assistant to hold the ball for him.

The performer then puts his foot on one end of the string and holds the other end up, his hand being extended above his head. The threaded ball rests on the stage.

The performer asks the ball to wake up, and it moves slightly; he then tells it to walk up, and it slowly passes up the string. When it has reached the middle of the string the performer tells it to stop, and the ball remains stationary. He then tells the ball to go back to the stage and run up the string—the whole length of it—very quickly. The ball

moves slowly and the performer repeats his command. The ball jumps up at once to the top of the string.

"Thank you," says the performer, "and now go down again, but go very slowly until you get half-way and then run down." Once more the ball obeys.

The trick can be continued in any way the performer pleases. Finally, an assistant comes forward, takes the ball and the string, and hands them down to the audience for further examination.

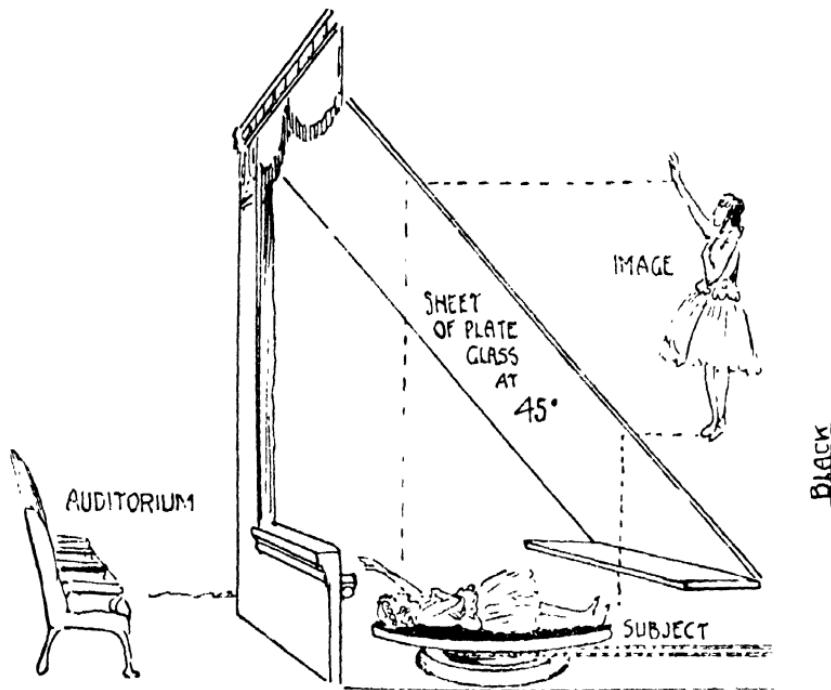
The secret is simple and good. When the performer told the assistant to hold the ball so that he could thread the string through it, the assistant obeyed orders and also did something else—unknown to the audience. He stuck a tiny hook into the top of the ball. Attached to this hook was a long thread which was passed over a pulley concealed in the flies and then out to the wings, where another assistant, hearing all that the performer was saying, caused the ball to be very obedient.

## CHAPTER XI

### OPTICAL ILLUSIONS

**I**N one sense every illusion presented by a magician is an optical illusion. The eyes of the audience are deceived; people are persuaded that they see something which, in reality, they do not see.

To a magician an optical illusion is one in which glass



is used for bringing about the effect, and the glass may be either a sheet of plain plate glass or a mirror. Naturally, the glass is used in such a way that its presence is not detected by the audience.

I suppose that the most famous illusion of this kind is that which will always be remembered as "Pepper's Ghost";

it was shown many years ago by its inventor, Professor Pepper, at the Polytechnic Institute. I doubt if it would draw audiences to-day, because most people are aware that the effects were produced by a clever arrangement of glasses.

When it was first presented the illusion was worked in a very simple way. The stage was really divided into two parts by a gap a few feet from the proscenium. A large sheet of plain glass was then placed on the edge of the back part of the stage and was then inclined at an angle of 45 degrees towards the proscenium; of course, the top of the glass was concealed by the flies.

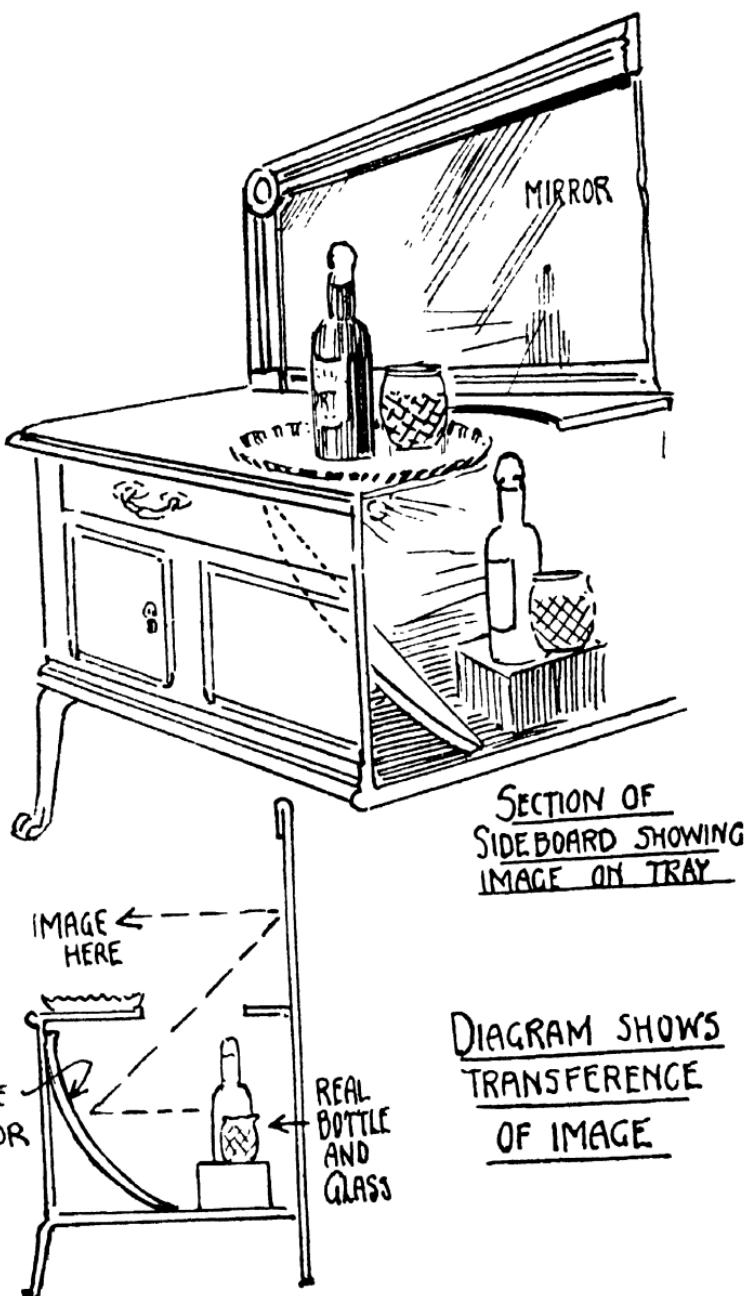
Now, if a man, playing the part of a ghost, stepped down into the gap in the stage and lay down there, he was reflected in an upright position on the glass, and anyone looking in front at the stage believed that they were looking at a man.

By gradually dimming the lights the reflection was destroyed and the ghost mysteriously disappeared, and that was about all he could do, for the simple reason that he had to lie on his back. Slight movements were introduced by letting the man lie on a board fitted with wheels; then the ghost appeared, when the board was pulled along, to glide across the stage.

Very soon after its first production the inventor found a way of making the ghost walk about and pass through walls on the stage. In this case the audience were really looking at a reflection of a reflection of a man.

The man playing the ghost stood upright under the back part of the stage. His image was reflected by a mirror placed at an angle in the gap already mentioned and was thus reflected on to the sheet of plain glass. Thus, since the man could move about in any way he pleased, it was only necessary to have suitable scenery on the stage to secure some wonderful effects, for the reflection was not destroyed by the scenery through which it passed.

That is the idea behind a great many optical illusions. I have heard that Professor Pepper thought of the illusion by seeing the reflection of himself in the window of a railway carriage, and I have no doubt that is true. I have often seen



marvellous effects produced by reflection in the plate glass windows of shops when those windows have been arranged at suitable angles to the passers-by.

When the secret of Pepper's Ghost became known, inventors of illusions tried to go one better and soon discovered the advantage of using a concave mirror as a reflector. Here is a pretty little illusion worked in this way.

The scene is a bachelor's "den", nicely furnished, with a small sideboard in the centre facing the audience. A young man comes on the stage, looks around and then, noticing the sideboard, goes up to inspect it. The "magnet" to the sideboard is a tray with a bottle of whisky, a siphon of soda-water, glasses, and a box of cigars, etc.

The young man turns to the audience and grins in happy anticipation of having a long drink and a smoke, but when he gets close up to the sideboard the tray with its contents melt away. There is nothing at the back of the sideboard but a mirror, and the young man, properly "sold", finds himself staring into it.

The working of this illusion is very simple. The tray with the whisky-bottle, etc. etc., on it is really concealed at the bottom of the sideboard. A concave mirror, placed at an angle, reflects the tray upwards, and the reflection passes through a hole cut in the top of the sideboard and so on to the mirror at the back of it. A cord is attached to the tray, and, at the right moment, an assistant behind the scenes merely draws the tray on one side.

It is not even necessary to do this. The young man can walk up to the sideboard, when he will discover that the things he sees are not there! A tray placed in front of the hole hides it from the view of the audience.

A very good "ghost effect" can be produced on a stage without the use of any glasses. We all know that real ghosts can pass through stone walls, so we will suppose that on the stage there is a stone wall of the stage kind. When the ghost is about to appear, the stage lights are lowered and green footlights are brought into use. The ghost then appears to pass right through the wall and, after he has said what he

is there to say, he gradually melts away. The lights are turned up and the stage is as it was before the ghost appeared.

This is a very simple illusion. A piece of the canvas of the scene is cut out, and the space filled in with a sheet of muslin which is painted lightly to resemble the rest of the scene. The "ghost" stands behind the muslin, and when the ordinary lights are on he is invisible. But when the lights in front are turned down and lights at the back of the muslin are switched on the ghost becomes visible, because the light at the back passes through the muslin, which is then transparent. To cause the ghost to disappear in a proper, ghostly way it is only necessary to turn the back lights down gradually and he melts away, leaving the stage without giving a hint of how he leaves it.

All the effects of a fake spiritualistic séance can be produced very easily on the stage. Large solid objects can be made to rise mysteriously in the air.

For this illusion some small sheets of thick plate glass are required, and in order that there may not be any reflections in them "from the front" the footlights are not used.

Each object which is to be raised is carefully balanced beforehand so that when it is raised there is no fear that it will topple over. A slit is cut in the stage, and a piece of plate glass inserted. The glass passes down through vertical grooves below the stage, and by a simple arrangement of cords and pulleys the glass is carried upwards at the right time, and so the object under which it has been placed is made to rise. If the slit in the stage is carried right across it the object can be moved after it has been raised, and some very uncanny effects can be produced. Even a very heavy object—such as a couch with a person lying on it—can be raised in this way if the object is properly balanced.

In order to get the best effect from such illusions they are generally combined with others worked in a different way. For example, if one were producing a "haunted room" on a stage it would not be advisable to move all the things in the same way. A very simple method of moving a cottage piano is to have a dummy one against the back cloth. The

piano, fitted with a row of keys, is opened, and a few chords are apparently struck; but the sound produced comes from another piano off-stage. Then a man gets into the dummy piano (through the scenery) and so causes it to run about the stage. At the same time small objects in the room can be raised by means of long loops of threads under them, the ends of the loops being manipulated by assistants off the stage. There is no surer way of puzzling an audience than by producing similar effects in three or four different ways at the same time. Every illusionist knows that an illusion which admits of only one explanation is, from the point of view of a magician, not a first-class illusion; when an audience have more than one clue to follow, their bewilderment is soon complete!

Here is a simple illusion suitable for a side-show: "The Man Without a Body." A small square stage has a curtain drawn across the front while the audience are assembling. When the curtain is drawn on one side the audience see an empty stage with a man's head floating in space, and to prove that the man is alive and well he smiles at the people and talks to them.

This effect is produced by means of a large mirror placed close up to the proscenium and then sloped backwards to the back of the stage at an angle of forty-five degrees. In the centre of the mirror a round hole is cut, and the man standing behind the mirror puts his head through the hole. To conceal the edge of the hole cut in the mirror the man wears a ruffle round his neck. The mirror reflects the ceiling, but, to the audience, this reflection appears to be the back of the stage. The audience imagine that they are looking at a bare room with a man's head floating in the centre of it.

The drawback to this illusion, from the point of view of the travelling showman, is the size and weight of the mirror used. Some genius, whose name has not been recorded, hit upon a good plan for overcoming that difficulty. He doubtless argued to himself that, after all, there was no reason why the whole of the ceiling should be reflected, so he reduced the size of the ceiling; in other words, he fitted up the illusion

in a little recess in a room. He then dressed up the illusion—made it more attractive—and also added one little detail which really made it more convincing—to the average audience.

I have no doubt that this illusion is still being shown by travelling showmen in empty shops; it is an ideal illusion for a side-show in a shop. I have seen it presented in shops more than once, and I am bound to add that I have never heard anyone in the audience suggest a solution of the puzzle.

The audience are not allowed to get too near the illusion; if they stand behind a barrier erected about eight feet from it they are safe (from the showman's point of view). When the audience first enter the shop they walk up to the barrier and see a small curtain hanging in front of a large box fixed to the wall. When a sufficient number of curious sightseers have paid their twopences the showman draws aside the curtain, and the audience see a large picture-frame in the "box", and in the centre of the frame, resting on three gilt rails, is the head of a very attractive young woman, who smiles, bows and talks.

The effect is produced by a mirror placed in front of the box and then turned at an angle of forty-five degrees to the back. A hole in the centre of the mirror and the woman's head and shoulders and a light wrap she wears hides the edges of the hole. The frame which the audience see is, of course, fixed to the top of the box.

The addition of the three gilt bars which are so placed as to suggest to the audience that the head is resting on them, was a stroke of genius. The bars are really only "half-bars" resting on the glass, but the reflection makes them appear to be round. The woman is really lying behind the box or standing under it and is concealed by a curtain. The effect is perfect—as far as it goes; it would be practically perfect if the woman's head could be made to move from side to side of the frame, but, owing to the conditions, that cannot be done.

Some excellent illusions have been made by enlarging small tricks, and, vice versa, some excellent tricks have been

produced by using the ideas behind illusions and making the apparatus portable.

For example, the illusion just described is really a miniature form of the illusion of the head floating in a bare room, but there is also a good piece of apparatus which can be easily carried in which the same idea is used. This apparatus is known as a "mirror glass" and some very good tricks can be done with it, but it has to be used with great care; otherwise, the trick is given away.

The glass is an ordinary tumbler, with a little ornamentation around the glass. Fitted into the centre of the tumbler is a double mirror—two pieces of looking-glass stuck together, back to back. The glass can be shown to the audience as an empty glass if one of the mirrors is facing the people and the glass is not held perfectly still; obviously, some object can be hidden behind the mirror. Therefore, the magician merely has to cover the tumbler over—turning it right round as he does so—and when he uncovers it the audience see something in the glass. The magician takes the thing out and once more shows the tumbler as empty.

The mirror glass can be used very conveniently for the magical production of handkerchiefs or the changing of handkerchiefs, because the handkerchiefs hide a good deal of the mirror. For example, the magician, standing in front of the mirror glass which is on his table, ties a red handkerchief and a blue one together. He rolls them up into a ball, taking care to keep the blue one on the outside, turns to the table, picks up the glass and at once puts the rolled-up handkerchiefs into it. Behind the mirror he has three handkerchiefs tied together, one red, one white and one blue; they are rolled up with the blue outside. The magician, having put the red and blue handkerchiefs into the glass, turns the glass round as he replaces it on his table. The audience see the blue handkerchief still in the glass and do not suspect that there has been any exchange. The advantage of using the glass in that way is that the glass need not be covered. The trick is done before the audience know that it is done. The performer then causes a white handkerchief to vanish,

and it is discovered tied in between the red and blue handkerchiefs.

A lamp-chimney can also be used in the same way, but in this case the edges of the double mirror have to be hidden by metal bands down the outside of the chimney; and to hold these bands in position the ends of the chimney have metal rings fitted to them. Personally, I prefer the tumbler.

Obviously, there is a danger in using the tumbler in a small room; a reflection may be seen in the mirror. To get over this difficulty the double mirror is replaced with a piece of highly-polished nickel, which really answers the purpose almost as well as the glass.

Here is a good illusion in which two mirrors are used. The attention of the audience is directed to a large cabinet on the stage. The cabinet stands on four legs, raising it from the stage, and there are two doors in front of it, so that when the doors are opened the audience get a clear view of the whole of the interior of the cabinet. In the centre of the cabinet there is a post.

The magician's assistant gets into the cabinet and the doors are closed for a few moments; when they are opened the cabinet is empty—that is to say, it appears to the audience to be empty.

The cabinet is lined with match-boarding. The back halves of the two sides are hinged to the back. When the assistant is inside the cabinet he stands at the back, opens these two sides and fastens them behind the post in the centre of the cabinet. Thus the assistant is hidden, and when the cabinet is opened it appears to be empty because the two half-sides which are now really visible to the audience are covered completely with two mirrors. These mirrors reflect the sides of the cabinet, and the whole of the interior appears to be plain wood.

The reader will understand that if the magician has the good fortune to have a couple of twins for his assistants he can produce a wonderful effect with this cabinet. One is made to disappear from the cabinet in the way described—

being really hidden there all the time—and the other assistant immediately appears in the gallery. Wonderful!

This principle—the placing of two mirrors together to form a large “V”—has been used in many illusions. A very gruesome effect is that of showing a live head on a small table. The head moves, speaks; the eyes open and close; the head is obviously alive. Yet the audience believe that they see under the table and at the sides; there does not appear to be any room for the concealment of a man or any way in which a man could be concealed. But he is there!

The illusion is presented in a small recess at the back of the stage. The table, which has three legs, one in front and two at the back, stands in the centre of the recess. Two mirrors are fixed between the front leg and the two back legs.

The back of the recess and the two sides are draped in the same way. The man, of course, is kneeling under the table but is completely hidden by the two mirrors. The audience think they see right under the table, but they are really looking at the reflections of the sides of the recess in the two mirrors; these reflections appear to the audience to be the back of the recess. The only disadvantage of the use of mirrors in this way is that there is “forbidden ground” on the stage for the magician and his assistants. They must not stand behind the mirrors—for if they did their legs would suddenly be hidden—and they must be careful not to get too near the mirrors when approaching them from the front, for a mirror which will reflect exactly what a magician wishes it to and no more has not yet been invented!

Magicians, always aiming at perfection in magic, have improved on the above idea by having V-shaped mirrors pushed up into position from below the stage and withdrawn again after the illusion has been presented, and this in such a way that the audience are none the wiser. Of course the table—or whatever object is used for the illusion—has to be concealed from sight of the audience during the few moments occupied by getting the mirrors into position and out of the way again.

Here is a little trick which is really an optical illusion,

but no glasses are used and the trick can be worked at very close quarters in a room; what is more, it is very easy.

The performer holds up a small box to the audience, who see that it is empty. The magician closes the lid, opens it again, and at once takes out a quantity of ribbons, gaily-coloured handkerchiefs, and flags, etc. etc.

The box is lined with black velvet. The various things to be produced are wrapped in a piece of black velvet and placed loosely in the box. On the performer's table there are three lighted candles placed there—apparently—so that the audience may get a good view of the interior of the box, but as a matter of fact the performer knows quite well that he is going to produce exactly the opposite effect with those



candles. He holds the box a short distance behind the candles and he has done the trick. The black velvet parcel in the box cannot be seen—thanks to the bright lights in front of the box. Every motorist knows that when driving at night it is impossible to see behind an oncoming car which has its headlights full on. That is the idea behind this box trick. The candles prevent the audience from seeing the inside of the box properly.

Here are a few feats which will be welcome at a party. I call them "Simple—but difficult—Tricks".

Place a cork in the neck of a wide-necked bottle and ask someone to blow the cork into the bottle. Nothing seems simpler but no one can do it. Ninety-nine persons out of a hundred will blow the cork right out of the bottle. The harder anyone blows at the cork the less chance there is of success.

Raise your hands in front of your chest and bring the two

first fingers together in a straight line. Ask someone to separate your fingers by holding your wrists and trying to pull them apart in a straight line with each other. It can't be done!

Put a coin on the edge of the table. Close the right eye with the left hand or the left eye with the right hand. Stand at arm's length from the table. Extend the first finger of the disengaged hand and try to knock the coin off the table. Very few people can do this at the first attempt; as a rule the "victim" finds himself waving his finger in the air—at nothing!

Here is a little feat of dexterity which can be worked up into a competition at a party.

Put an opera hat, crown downwards, on the floor. Stand two yards away from the hat and try to throw a pack of cards into it, one card at a time. Very few persons can manage to get one card into the hat, and when that does happen it is usually a fluke.

Put your two clenched fists together one on the other and ask someone to separate them by pushing them on one side. The feat cannot be done in that way. But let the persons extend the two first fingers and give your knuckles a sharp rap in opposite directions and the fists will be separated at once; in fact, you will not be able to hold them together.

## CHAPTER XII

### MY OWN TRICKS

THE man who studies magic solely with the object of earning his living as a magician is never likely to be very successful. One has to begin with a love of magic, and I suppose that such love is inborn in the hearts of most boys. Unfortunately, the boyish love of magic soon cools in the great majority of cases, probably because boys will not take magic seriously. They see a professional performer doing tricks, apparently with the greatest ease, and joking with his audience while he is doing them. Then the boys go home, get hold of a few tricks, and try to imitate the magician they have seen. And that way lies failure, and after a time the boys give up magic in disgust and declare "there is nothing in it". What they should say, if they wished to speak the truth, is that there is too much in magic for them. To the earnest student of magic the days are never long enough; the study is an all-absorbing one and the interest in it, to a real lover of magic, is inexhaustible.

I started off with the average boy's love of tricks and when I ceased to be a boy I became a professional performer. Those were the boom days for music-hall artists; anyone who could present a fairly good turn was sure of a good living. I never had any trouble in getting engagements, and I should probably be trying to get some now if I had not disliked the continual travelling from town to town and all the inconveniences and hardships of living in "digs".

However, I have never had much sympathy with the man who quarrels with his bread and butter, and so, though I was not altogether satisfied with my way of living I continued to be a magician on the halls until fate seemed to will me to enter the commercial side of magic.

The change came about in this way, and I would remind my readers that all this happened many years ago. One day Carl Hertz came to me and told me that he had seen Horace Goldin do a very good trick with some rice and two bowls. Carl Hertz confessed that the trick had completely fooled him. He added that he did not like the idea of going to Goldin and asking him for the secret. Did I think I could help him?

I had never seen the trick—it is common property nowadays—but I took careful notes of Carl Hertz's description of it, and eventually I worked it out and made the trick. When I performed it privately to Carl Hertz he exclaimed: "You've got it! That's the trick I want!" Then he added that as I seemed able to make a trick from merely hearing the description of it he would be very glad if I would make some more tricks for him. I willingly consented.

Carl Hertz took the rice bowls away with him and presented the trick at once during his tour in the provinces. He then showered orders for tricks on me and I had to get a workshop. In a very short time I found that my name was known throughout the country as that of a man who could make workable tricks for professional magicians, and I was inundated with work. To my great joy I was able to give up my professional tours and stay in one place. Horace Goldin commissioned me to build him a series of illusions, and very soon I was working for every magician of note in the world. Naturally, I soon found it more convenient to work in London than in the provinces.

I attribute what success I have had as a maker of tricks and illusions to the fact that I have always been able to look at every piece of apparatus from the point of view of the magician who is going to use it. That knowledge has always been a great asset with me. For example, many a time a man has brought me the idea of a trick suitable for a drawing-room performer, with the idea of putting the trick on the market. On many occasions of this kind I have turned down the idea, not because it has not been a good idea, not because the effect has not been a good one, and not because the working of the trick has not been all that it ought to be, but just

because I know the requirements of a drawing-room performer, having been one myself. A man who has to give private performances cannot do with tricks that require a great amount of preparation just before a performance, or tricks that are "messy", or tricks that cannot be carried easily. And so I have often been able to prevent my clients from wasting their money.

Very often a client has come to me for a trick without the slightest notion of the trick he wants! He has just told me of the conditions under which the trick is to be performed—a very important detail—and the time that the performance of the trick is to occupy, and I have been left to get on with it! And so I have acquired the habit of "thinking tricks", looking at things from the point of view of the magical inventor, and I have managed to invent a few tricks, of various kinds. And now I will give some of them away, and they shall be as simple as possible, so that anyone can do them after a little practice.

Here is a little card trick very suitable for home performance.

The magician begins by shuffling the pack and telling his audience that instead of asking someone to select a card—the start of so many tricks—he is going to take one himself and he is going to have the Queen of Hearts.

He takes the card from the pack, shows both sides of it (without calling attention to the fact that he is doing so), and explains that he has chosen that card because he knows that the Queen of Hearts is very wise. He places the card in a small envelope and seals it up. Then he places the envelope in one a little larger and seals that up, and he continues in the same way with a third and a fourth envelope.

The magician then says that the Queen of Hearts is able to tell a lady's fortune and he suggests that the ladies in the company should cut the pack to see who should have the privilege of having her fortune told. The lady cutting highest wins.

"Perhaps a little slow music would help the Queen in her meditations," suggests the magician. Thereupon, the pianist,

having been instructed beforehand as to what he is to play, begins to play "Do not trust him, gentle maiden!", but is immediately stopped by the magician, who protests that the pianist is robbing the Queen of her job. He holds the envelope to his ear and says that he rather fancies the Queen has finished her prophesy. Slitting open the largest envelope he takes out the next, and continues till he reaches the last, in which the Queen of Hearts was placed. From this envelope the magician draws a small card and holds it up for all to see. The audience read: "Do not worry, fair lady, all will be well." The magician holds the envelope up for inspection and everyone can see that the Queen has disappeared.

The simple secret of this trick is in the construction of the card—the Queen of Hearts. This card is made up of two cards pasted together along three of their sides, leaving a pocket in the space between them. The inside of the pocket is covered with paper exactly like that of the envelope, and a small card with the words mentioned written on it is slipped into the pocket. The conjurer, after taking the small card from the pocket, squeezes the two sides of the envelope slightly so that the audience can see that it is apparently empty; in doing this he naturally squeezes the double card; the audience, looking into the pocket and seeing nothing but white paper take it for granted that the envelope is empty.

An expert magician would probably conclude the trick by suggesting that perhaps the Queen had rejoined the pack and he would show the card there. To do this the expert would palm a card from his pocket and add it to the pack when he was handling it. The beginner can bring about the same effect by having an extra Queen concealed under a sheet of paper or a handkerchief on the table. The paper or handkerchief is picked up and at the same moment the pack is dropped over the extra card. Then the pack is shuffled to bring the card to the centre, for it would not do to let people see that the Queen had returned to the top of the pack.

I once invented a card frame for a magician who wanted one; he asked for a trick frame that was unlike any other



### THE AUTHOR

created an honorary Indian Chief. The ceremony was performed by Chief White Horse Eagle. The title bestowed on the author was Bar-Bu-Rat-A (Great White Magician and Man of Light)



frame on the market. Here is a simple trick that can be done with the help of a trick frame.

The frame is first held up to the audience, who see that there is nothing in it. The frame is covered with a handkerchief. A card is chosen by a member of the audience and caused to vanish. When the frame is uncovered the card is there—securely in position behind the glass front of the frame.

Obviously, the card which is made to vanish is not the card which appears in the frame, but a duplicate of it, and as the frame is prepared for the trick beforehand by having a card hidden in it the reader will understand that he must make certain that the person taking a card from the pack will take a card similar to that in the frame.

How is the magician to do this? An expert magician has no difficulty in getting a person to take the card he wants that person to take; the process is known as “forcing” a card, and it is not easy. The novice can get over the difficulty in this way. Let him first do a trick or two with ordinary cards and then exchange the pack (either by dropping the ordinary cards into his pocket, as though he had finished with card tricks for a time, and then taking out a trick pack, or by exchanging one pack for the other behind some piece of apparatus on the table). The trick pack is simply made up of the same card repeated many times, and so there is no difficulty in getting someone to take the right card! As the performer has been using an ordinary pack no one thinks that he has exchanged it for a trick pack; of course the backs of both packs must be alike.

To cause the card to vanish the conjurer can use a trick handkerchief made of two handkerchiefs sewn together all round the edges; there is a slit in the centre of one of the handkerchiefs and in wrapping the chosen card in the handkerchief the conjurer slips it into the slit. Naturally, when the conjurer shakes out the handkerchief the card is not seen, because it is hidden between the two handkerchiefs. Now we come to the construction of my frame, with the use of which the trick is completed.

The frame has a wide mount with a clear space, of the size of a card, in the centre. The mount is obviously narrower than the card because otherwise the audience would guess at once at the conclusion of the trick that the card was hidden behind the mount. A small piece of the frame is hollow, and in this piece together with the mount the card is hidden; a little catch at the back of the frame enables the performer to slide the card to the centre of the frame when he is covering it with a handkerchief.

A short, quick trick. The performer takes a court card from the pack and holds it up so that the audience may see it. He also tells the audience what the card is—say, the King of Spades. (It is very important to tell the audience as much as possible about the effect of the trick; some people do not grasp the effect of a trick very quickly, even when the trick is quite simple.)

The magician waves the King of Spades in the air for a moment and then shows that it has changed to the King of Hearts.

The change is brought about by means of a trick card—a King of Spades with a King of Hearts fastened over it, but the latter card is really divided into three pieces joined together by rubber hinges. When the conjurer first shows the card to the audience the top and bottom of the King of Hearts are folded to the centre and are held in place by the performer's thumb; the audience see the King of Spades. The magician cannot allow the audience to inspect the card very closely, and so he keeps his hand moving while he is showing the card. To cause the King of Spades to change to the King of Hearts the performer merely has to take his thumb away from the centre of the card, and the top and bottom pieces of the King of Hearts fly back into position—thanks to the rubber hinges, which act as springs.

Here is a good little trick with coloured handkerchiefs. The performer shows an empty tin canister, rattles his wand in it, to prove that it is empty, and pours some water in it. He then puts on the lid and tells the audience that the water he has used was taken from a fairy stream one day when there

was a rainbow in the sky and some of the colours from the rainbow came down to the water in a magical way.

“I will show you some of the colours,” says the magician, and with this he takes off the lid and from the canister of water he draws out three or four coloured silk handkerchiefs, perfectly dry. The performer then pours the water out of the canister.

The trick here is in the lid of the canister. Inside the lid is a little tin receptacle, the base and the top of which are made of strong wire netting. When the lid is put on the canister and removed, the secret receptacle is left on the top of the canister, but just inside it, and in that receptacle the handkerchiefs are hidden. Directly after the handkerchiefs have been taken out the performer is able to pour out the water because it flows through the wire netting. The lid is then put on and the performer—as an afterthought—takes it off again, bringing with it the wire receptacle, and once more he can show that the canister is really empty.

The following thought-reading trick goes very well at a party. The performer’s “medium”—a young lady—first goes out of the room and someone goes with her to make sure that she does not listen to the conversation that follows on her departure.

The performer then asks the audience to choose two or three articles for the purpose of the trick and to think of them. Anyone may then ask the medium to return to the room; she stands close to the door and the performer keeps his back towards her, so that he cannot possibly make any signs to her. The performer then proceeds to touch different articles in the room with his magic wand. Directly he touches one of the things of which the audience are thinking the medium stops him and says: “You are thinking of that.” The performer continues the experiment to the end without saying one word to anyone.

A very simple secret. The performer touches objects apparently at haphazard, but he takes care to touch some black object before he touches one of the articles of which the audience are thinking. And that’s that.

Should an encore be demanded the performer can suggest that it is rather a strain on his medium to carry out the experiment again with a number of objects, but he will try it with one. The medium retires and when she returns the performer points quickly to various objects until the medium stops him. In this case the performer and the medium have agreed beforehand that he will stop at a certain number when he has touched a certain number of articles. The encore, done briskly, is very puzzling.

A good trick for children. The performer shows a box in pieces; he picks up one piece and bangs on it to show that it is just a solid piece of wood. He then puts the bottom of the box on the table and fits the four sides of the box to it by means of wires and slots. The table, by the way, has no cloth on it and the top of the table is thin.

Having shown the box in its completed state to the audience, who can see that it is empty, the performer dips his hand into it and immediately takes out a quantity of small handkerchiefs and flags, Chinese lanterns, ribbons, etc., and finishes up with the production of a large Union Jack.

The piece on which the performer bangs is what he says it is, a solid piece of wood. It is the bottom of the box. The four sides are made of tin painted to resemble wood, and the performer does not bang on these! Each side is hollow and the lower half of each piece is really a door, fitted with a little catch which can be operated from the outside of the box. The performer merely presses on a small button or knob, the door opens inwards and lies flat at the bottom of the box. All that the performer has to do is to take the things out and display them.

After the first display the performer can again show the box empty before he proceeds to open the second side, but it is not advisable to show the box empty afterwards; the move would be too obvious.

Another quick trick. The assistant comes on with a tray on which are two tumblers; he places the tray on the table and hands the performer a silk handkerchief. This is placed

by the performer in the glass on his left; he raises the other glass and shows that it is empty.

Lifting up the tray so that all may see it, the performer suddenly shouts "Go!" and in a flash the handkerchief travels from one glass to another—at least, that is the effect produced by the trick. To be truthful, the handkerchief in the glass on the left-hand side of the tray disappears by a mechanical process into the tray and another handkerchief, which has been hidden in the tray is drawn up into the glass.

Both glasses have a hole cut in them. A thread passes through the hole of the first glass and is brought down and connected to a rod in the tray. Another handkerchief which has been passed through a loop at the end of a thread is hidden in the other side of the tray; the thread is brought up, passed through the hole in the glass, down through the tray and is connected with the rod below it and causing the simple mechanism to work. The performer, with his fingers under the tray, is able to pull on the rod and with the one movement cause the first handkerchief to disappear and the second to be drawn up into the glass.

Many years ago, when there was a small boom in trunk illusions, I set myself the task of thinking out one which should be slightly different from any of the others. At last I came to the conclusion that the only way in which I could possibly be original was by altering the material of which the trunk was made, and finally I decided to substitute glass for wood. I then found that I had set myself a good puzzle, for how can there be any place in a glass trunk in which to hide any kind of mechanical device? However, I was determined not to be done, and eventually I brought out my Glass Box Illusion, which I now describe.

The audience were told, of course, that they would certainly be able to see through this box trick even before the trick was done! Two members of the audience were invited to come on the stage and inspect the box, but as they could see it was made of glass the examination was usually very short. An assistant got in the box, which was then locked. The key was given to one of the men who had examined the box,

and a screen was drawn in front of the box for a few minutes. Then the man who had been imprisoned in the box stepped from behind the screen, and again the box could be examined.

The box was not made of large sheets of glass, but smaller sheets connected in the centre by a broad metal band which encircled the box and, of course, the edges of the box had to be made of metal to hold the glass.

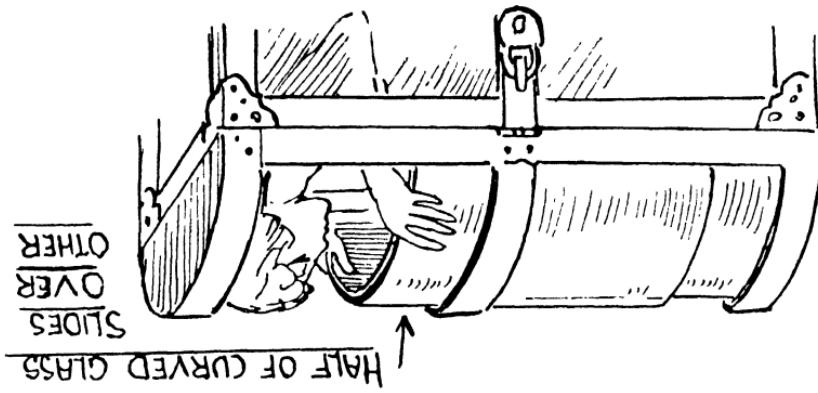
Anyone examining the box would naturally open the lid. The examiner would then see that the two halves of the lid were securely fastened to the metal band in the centre with a number of small screws. As a matter of fact, however, one half of the lid was loose. All the screws apparently fixing it tightly to the centre band were dummies except the centre one; this was screwed up tightly, so that anyone who tried to move that half of the lid was unable to do so.

Directly the box was hidden the assistant inside it loosened the centre screw, and he was then able to slide that half of the lid under the other half and get out of the box. He then unlocked the box with a duplicate key, pushed the "half lid" back into position, turned the centre screw up till the lid could be examined once more and then locked the box.

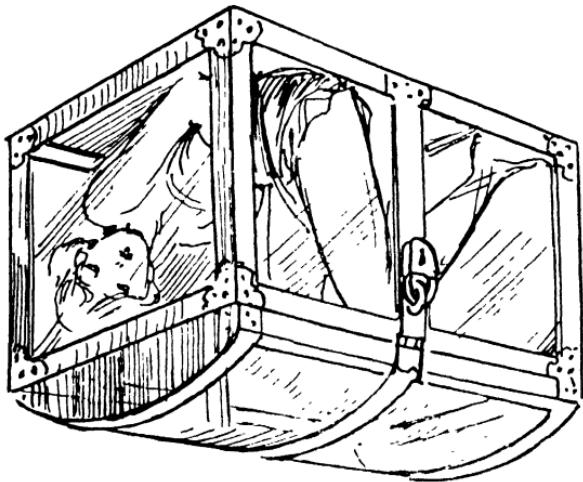
Nothing could be simpler, but I would assure my readers that I did not solve the problem of the Glass Box without much thought and many experiments with wooden boxes.

One gets ideas for tricks and illusions in all sorts of ways; sometimes they come from unexpected sources. Here is an illusion which was really suggested to me by an amateur magician who got "in a bit of a muddle" with a trick—to use his own words. I suddenly thought that I might work out an illusion in which the performer appeared to be in difficulties; of course, the finish had to be a surprise to the audience. Eventually I invented an illusion which I called "Mental Telegraphy"; it was an illusion which always amused people because the first part seemed to be entirely wrong.

Standing on the stage there was a large blackboard on an easel. The performer came on and announced that he would have much pleasure in presenting a little experiment in the difficult art of second-sight.



LADY LOCKED IN CRYSTAL TRUNK



The performer's assistant, a lady, then came on the stage and was blindfolded, apparently mesmerized, etc., and was left standing in the centre of the stage with nothing to do!

The performer, after many "false starts" at explaining the nature of the experiment he was about to present, finally confessed that one or two details had slipped his memory. Would the audience kindly excuse him while he looked up one or two little details which he had forgotten.

Hanging on the blackboard was a large book, bound in black. The performer opened the book, turned over the pages, and appeared to be in trouble; he could not find the place. The audience were amused because, unnoticed by the performer, the lady had got bored with the proceedings and, after pulling off her bandage, had walked off the stage.

The performer at last found the instructions in the book and, looking up, noticed that the lady had gone. Pretending to be very annoyed at the complete failure of the illusion the performer pulled out his revolver and fired at the blackboard, which immediately changed into a large book. The performer then opened the book and—out stepped the lady.

In this case the comedy side of the trick was more important than the actual trick itself, which was very simple. The big book was really in front of the audience all the time, being hidden in a recess of the blackboard. The lower part of the "book" was made of black cloth, which was pleated up and held in position at the bottom of the blackboard. Directly the performer fired his revolver an assistant below the stage pulled out the pleated cloth by means of two cords till it reached the stage. The lady was then able to step up through the stage and get behind the cover of the book in readiness for the finale of the illusion.

## CHAPTER XIII

### TRICKS OF BOGUS MEDIUMS

**I** AM a spiritualist; that is to say, I believe that there is an after life and that it is possible to get into touch with those who have passed on from this world.

I mention this so that my readers will know that I am not prejudiced against mediums; on the contrary, I have the highest respect for those who, being endowed with certain gifts which are denied to most of us, are able to form a link between the living and the dead. It is the fraudulent medium for whom I have the utmost contempt.

Consider how a bogus medium gets his money. People who have lost friends or relatives very dear to them go to the medium in the hope of getting into touch with the spirits of those friends and relatives. The bogus medium convinces his dupes that he does what they wish him to do, and then this skunk, knowing that every word he has told his victims is false, demands the payment of high fees from them. Beside such a mean thief the average burglar seems, to me, to be almost saintly!

Now, in order to be convinced of the truth of an after-life it is not always necessary to go even to a genuine medium. Proof is sometimes forced on one. Some years ago a man who had an office in the building in which I am writing committed suicide with gas. This man's office was at the top of the building. One evening, some weeks after the inquest, I was working very late and very hard; all my thoughts were concentrated on the matter in hand. There came a sudden interruption. I heard a man's footsteps on the stairs outside my office. Knowing that the outer door of the building was locked and that it was extremely unlikely that any of the tenants of other offices would come in at that late hour, I

walked out of my office on to the landing and called: "Who's there? What do you want?"

I heard the footsteps at the top of the building and I called again. Receiving no answer I went up the stairs, and shouted. Then, with an electric torch, I examined the place thoroughly; all the office doors were locked.

I went back to my office and continued to work. Presently I heard the footsteps coming down the stairs. I went out on to the landing again, but there was no one there.

Then I realized what was happening and, when I had locked my office and was going down the stairs I was rather glad that I had an electric torch with me!

A few evenings afterwards I had the same experience over again. Finally, I got so used to hearing the footsteps when I was working late that I took no notice of them. Sometimes, when I was unusually late and was really half asleep I was suddenly startled to life by hearing three or four distinct raps on the back of a chair close to me. This happened many times that winter, for I was very busy at the time. I always regarded those raps as a kind of warning that I had done enough work for one day and that it was time to go home, and I always acted on that hint.

Then, for some months, the rappings and the footsteps were not heard and, for a time, I forgot all about them. Suddenly one evening I heard a thundering noise on the outer door of this office. I called out and got no reply. I put down my pen and was about to go out to see who the late visitor was and then—I remembered. For a few seconds there was silence. Then came a banging on the door of the room—not the outer door this time! The force used was so great that my overcoat, which was hanging on the door, moved. I spoke, but got no reply. The banging was not repeated, and since that evening I have not heard the sounds of rappings and footsteps. Why?

One cannot say for certain, of course, but I regarded that final loud banging as a "good-bye". The wandering earth-bound spirit had found peace at last; that, at any rate, is the explanation I gave myself.

From this the reader will understand that it is not always necessary to go to a medium in order to obtain "manifestations".

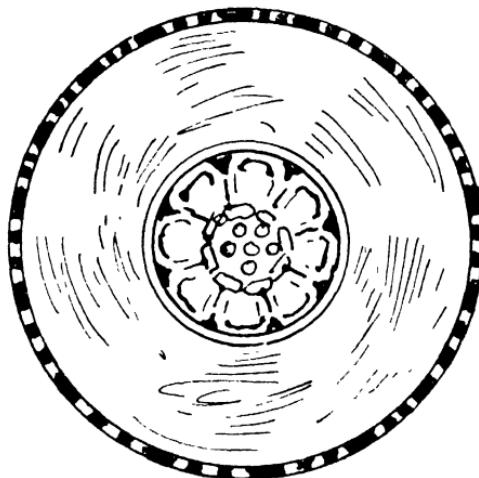
In order to make what the "spirit voices" say at a séance seem credible a bogus medium creates the right kind of atmosphere at the séance. He knows that people come to him in order to see or hear or feel something uncanny, and the bogus medium, being a business man, knows that he must not disappoint his clients. Sometimes the darkness of the séance room will be lit up slightly by tiny pin-points of light that seem to flicker round the walls.

This is a very ingenious trick. If at the conclusion of the séance some sceptic wishes to examine the medium he is at liberty to do so. The medium has nothing on him which can possibly account for the appearance of those mysterious lights. But the "apparatus" was certainly in its right place before the séance began!

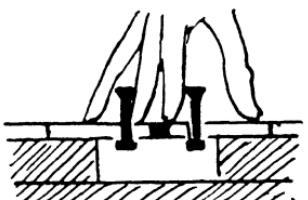
The bogus medium is provided with one or two silent wax matches; such matches make no noise when they are struck. The other gadget required is a little tube of liquorice fitted at one end with a piece of gelatine. Under cover of the darkness the medium lights a match and screens the flame with his coat; maybe he will have a tiny piece of emery paper sewn to the lining of his coat pocket, so that he can strike a match easily. Possibly he will carry a few matches in his shoe and light one on the heel of the shoe. To produce the spots of light at a distance he inserts the lighted match in the tube of liquorice and waves it about for a moment. Then he puts his thumb on the gelatine end for a few seconds to shut out the light and then—starts again. At the end he eats his apparatus! The lighted match is flicked into the fireplace or dropped down the collar out of harm's way.

I fancy that most of the best—or worst, it depends which way you look at their exploits—bogus mediums are trained in America. I know of a shop in Chicago which makes no secret of the fact that all the paraphernalia for holding a sham spiritualistic séance can be obtained there. Bogus mediums go

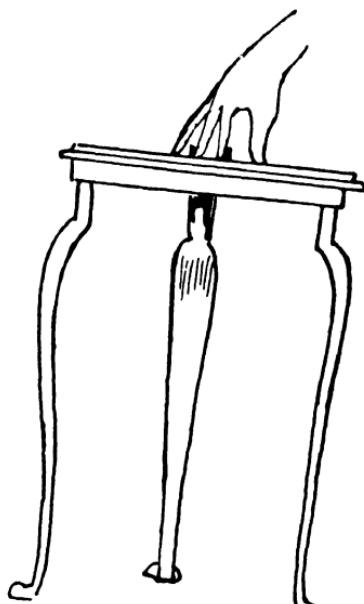
## DEVICES USED BY FAKE MEDIUMS



DESIGN OF  
INLAID TABLE



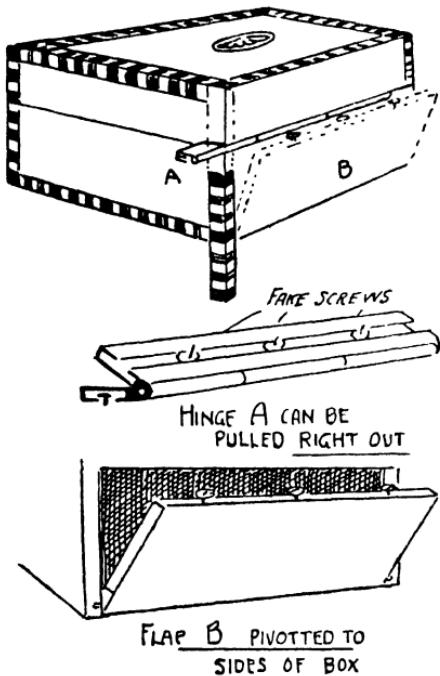
2 PIPS IN ROSE  
LOOSE



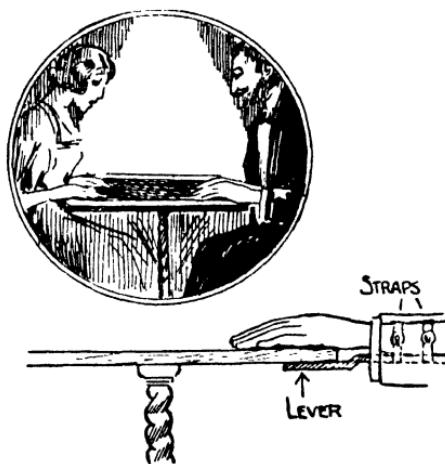
LIFTING TABLE

A table used by fake mediums. The drawing shows how the covering design can be employed by the medium to make the table lift.

## DEVICES USED BY FAKE MEDIUMS



Details of a fake box used by bogus mediums. The construction of the box enables it secretly to be opened although it seems to be securely locked.



Apparatus for tilting and moving table.

with the same words on their lips that magicians always have ready when they come to see me. "Got anything new?"

Once when I was in America I heard of a lady medium whom, from the tales that were told me, I judged to be extremely gifted or—a clever swindler. Some friends told me that this lady made a point of being thoroughly examined by a committee of ladies before a séance began, and that she did not seem really satisfied until she had removed every article of clothing from her body.

That seemed convincing enough, but somehow it did not satisfy me. I was told that after the medium had been thoroughly examined she would produce spirit flowers and, at times, a live bird, and that at other times she seemed to be clothed in a white cloud.

After a time I managed to get into touch with a committee of ladies who had examined this wonderful medium before a séance. I asked how the examination was conducted and was told that the medium took off all the clothes above her waist, her shoes and stockings and then let down her shirts and under garments. She was absolutely nude. I asked a few more questions, and I began to be a little suspicious. I suggested that another séance should be held and that the committee should have the assistance of a lady detective in the examination of the medium. The suggestion was acted upon and—there was no séance that evening!

The detective told me afterwards that my guess had been correct. The lady medium stripped herself to the waist, let down her skirts for a few moments and was about to pull them up again when the detective stopped her with the request that she would step right out of her skirts and put on a dressing-gown which the detective had provided. The medium began to make excuses for not doing anything of the kind; she hinted that to stand there naked even for a few seconds would be an offence to her ideas of modesty, and so on. The detective insisted that this should be done and the medium then lost her temper. In the little scene that followed the detective grabbed the lady's skirts and her game was up! Cunningly concealed pockets in the top of the skirt carried

a quantity of flowers and the material for the mysterious "white cloud". In one of the pockets there was a cage with a tiny bird in it. It was the custom of the medium to create a sensation at the séance by quietly putting the bird in the hand of one of the sitters. On paper there may seem nothing in such an action, but I would ask my readers to imagine the feelings of a highly-strung woman at a séance when she suddenly discovers "something alive" in her hand.

A word about the mysterious material used for the production of the "white cloud", because this stuff is extensively used by bogus mediums for more than one purpose. I know from experiences told me that if a sceptic at a séance secretly cuts off a piece of this white material and then, on the following day tries to buy anything like it, the quest will be in vain. Yet the material is only ordinary cheese cloth that has been well soaked in water and then dried; the water alters its texture entirely. Although the cloth has a wide mesh this is invisible in the dark; the stuff appears to be fine lawn.

The soaking with water takes all the stiffening out of the cheese cloth, and a large piece can be packed away in a very small space. It is used sometimes by bogus mediums who specialize in the production of "ectoplasm" from the side of the body—a very convenient spot for its production! It is also used for the clothing of a "spirit form" at a séance.

After the exposure of this medium I asked the ladies who had been present at the séances how it was that they had ever engaged the medium. I was told that they had heard of her from other "inquirers" who had been very impressed by the séances. Without taking any steps to discover whether the medium was what she professed to be—a materializing medium—they engaged her as soon as they could at a fee of £20 a séance. Yet not one of those good ladies would have engaged a parlour-maid without first inquiring into her character!

Sometimes I think that people who are swindled by bogus mediums almost deserve to be, for they do not take the most elementary precautions against fraud. Many of them are so eager to believe what they want to believe, to see what they

want to see, that they almost ask to be swindled. If these enthusiasts would only make it a rule not to sit with any medium who has not been examined and passed by a spiritualist society all the bogus mediums would soon be out of work; as things are these swindlers earn big incomes. The lady I have mentioned probably made at least £80 a week without any trouble. Of one thing I am certain; she is not making quite so much now, for the news of the exposure soon spread—privately. Of course it took a little time for the news to leak out because people who have been swindled by a simple trick never like to tell the world how easily they have been gulled. The bogus mediums, having studied human nature, are well aware of this fact and trade on it for as long as they can get an audience. The real medium never has any difficulty in getting an audience; her trouble is to get a little peace for herself. Her post is always large; her telephone is always ringing, and as her work is not particularly interesting to her—for the simple reason that from the beginning of a trance to the end she is unconscious—she is apt to get rather bored with spiritualism.

Sometimes a medium—who may, or may not be, genuine—will give a reason why she will not submit to the tests of a certain spiritualist society. In such a case the person who wishes to sit at a séance of the medium is justified in taking every precaution against fraud. Sometimes the simplest precautions are sufficient. Some years ago I was rung up one morning by a daily paper who wanted me to test a couple of mediums—men—who were reputed to be marvellous. I was too busy to go to the office of the paper, but I told the inquirer what to do, and I heard afterwards what happened.

The two “mediums” were shown into a room and asked to take off their shoes and stockings and to kneel down. Their big toes and thumbs were then fastened together with stout wire, and in that uncomfortable position they remained for about two hours. They then asked to be released. Nothing had happened at that séance, but something happened afterwards. As the two men were leaving the office the trousers of one of them fell down, for the simple reason that his braces

had not been fastened. This simple-minded bogus medium had thought that he would be allowed to sit on a chair in the dark with his hands tied in his own way. He had intended to get one hand free, pull down his braces and lay them across his knee and replace his hand in the knotted tie. That was to have been his big spiritualistic feat. It didn't come off, but his trousers nearly did.

A bogus medium who holds séances in his own room usually has a very easy task. I have known a medium to invite the sitters to make a thorough examination of his room before a séance and for the sitters to refuse the invitation! That medium knew to whom he was talking. He was well aware of the fact that his visitors were gentlefolk who looked upon him as their host and who would certainly not show him the slightest courtesy such as would be involved in a search for any kind of trick apparatus. The invitation to search the room and the medium was waved on one side and I, suspecting that medium of trickery, felt sure that he had a little difficulty in hiding a smile of satisfaction at the easy task before him. As a matter of fact, even if the sitters had searched the room for any of the little gadgets with which manifestations can be made I doubt if any would have been found, for the medium was no fool.

But one day he met with the fate he deserved. There happened to be present at a séance a man who, knowing that he would be called upon to pay a big fee for the privilege of sitting there, was determined to see that he got what he was going to pay for—a genuine séance. (I think the man came from Lancashire!) And so, when this man felt an icy hand pressed against his forehead he was a bit startled, and he grabbed the hand! Then, I am sorry to say, the silence of the séance-room was broken by a very bad word said very loudly by the medium, who was supposed to be in a trance. The lights were turned on and the secret of the icy, clammy hand was given away completely. The medium had not had time to close a little secret "door" in the arm of the easy-chair in which he had been reclining. The open "door" revealed a little locker in which there was a lump of ice; the

"hand" was merely a rubber glove. No further explanation seems necessary!

The pressure of a cold hand on a sitter's forehead produces such a good impression that many bogus mediums work the trick, but, of course, not always in the same way. I have known the rubber glove and the ice to be in a small tin concealed under the seat of the medium's chair. Anyone who will experiment with a rubber glove and a piece of ice to keep it cold will see at once what an effect is produced with this trick when it is performed in the dark; indeed, I have known women to faint after they have felt the cold hand on their foreheads at a séance.

There are two reasons why the tricks of a bogus medium are simple. One reason is that they have to be performed in the dark, and although the medium, being an old hand at the game, can see a little better in the dark than you and I can, still, he knows that darkness is a handicap to a man who wishes to perform very delicate tricks.

The other reason why the medium's tricks are so simple is that no others are necessary! The medium is really a dishonest conjurer, and every conjurer knows that the best tricks are simple—when you know them. The simple explanation of a trick is never the one of which the average adult audience think. The mind of a child is much more likely to discover the secret of a good trick than is the mind of an adult, merely because the mind of the child is occupied with simple thoughts. I have known a bogus medium to bamboozle adult sitters with tricks which would not have deceived a schoolboy.

Here, for example, is a very simple swindle, but it produced a wonderful impression on numbers of sitters until the bogus medium who worked it was caught out.

The séance-room of this medium was so bare that when she suggested to the sitters that they should examine it they usually smiled. What was there for them to examine? A few comfortable chairs on which they were going to sit. Nothing else at all. But the medium always insisted on the room being examined, the door sealed, the windows closed, etc. etc. Then

the medium would recline in an easy chair and invite the sitters to fasten a piece of gauze over her and the chair. This task could be done in any way the sitters pleased, but the medium generally suggested that they should imprison her in a cage of gauze by throwing the gauze over her and the chair and fastening it to the floor—or to the chair—with drawing-pins. And yet, in spite of those conditions, spirit voices were heard and spirit manifestations were seen by the sitters.

Curiously enough, that bogus medium was bowled out one evening by a sitter who was nearly blind. That fact will not seem remarkable when one remembers that people who have lost the use of their eyes usually have very good ears! And so it happened that during the séance this lady heard something which the other sitters had not heard—the squeaking of a shoe. Not only that, but she was able to know the spot whence the sound came. That is a very difficult thing to do, as a very simple test will prove to any reader. The eyes are closed while someone rolls a coin along the floor. (Of course there must not be a carpet on the floor.) When the coin has come to rest it is very difficult to point to the spot where the coin is, in fact success is usually a fluke. The explanation, of course, is simple enough; the average person is accustomed to see and to hear at the same time; take away the sense of sight and the sense of hearing fails. But blind people, being accustomed to hearing without seeing, can do so remarkably well; in fact, that is why blind men make very good piano tuners; they have good ears.

When the lady heard the squeaking of a shoe she did not call out, and in keeping silence she showed her good sense. If she had said that someone was moving in the room the other sitters would probably have asked her to be quiet; there would have been a little discussion and, if the lights had been turned on the secret of that séance would not have been discovered. As it was, the lady merely extended one of her legs as far as she could in the direction of the sound she had heard. There was a loud crash and the lights were switched on quickly. The lady had tripped up one of the sitters who

was a confederate of the medium. Some of the spirit voices came from the medium; the bass and tenor voices came from the confederate—a man, who worked the usual manifestations of the appearances of spirit hands and faces.

From this it will be seen that if one is anxious not to be defrauded one must not be content with choosing a medium with credentials; it is also advisable to know something about the personal history of the sitters at a séance; they, too, must be above suspicion.

Some people—mostly women—are shy of being present with others at a séance, and so they go to a medium and ask for a private séance. And what an easy task for the bogus medium who has only one sitter to swindle! There is practically no difference between that kind of séance and a consultation with a fortune-teller. The visitor usually goes to the medium for advice and, in asking for it, gives herself away completely! The medium sees at once what he is expected to say. Perhaps he will go through the formality of pretending to get into touch with his “control” but, if he is particularly lazy—and my experience is that most bogus mediums are very lazy, probably because they get their money so easily—he will merely tell his visitor that he will consult his control and let her know the result. To the bogus medium a client who will be satisfied with that kind of treatment really means “money for nothing”!

Unfortunately for women—and women are the bogus mediums' best clients for “single” sittings—the evil does not stop at the cheating. Many a woman will consult a medium about her matrimonial difficulties. Maybe her husband is not quite so attentive to her as she thinks he ought to be and someone else is perfect in his attentions. So the silly woman asks the medium, an absolute stranger, what she should do. Shall she leave her husband. Can she trust her lover? The medium plays his cards carefully and slowly and diabolically well!

In the majority of cases, of course, the woman is really anxious to leave her husband. Maybe she will confide in the medium that if only her mother, or her father, or an aunt, or a

big brother were alive all would be well, for then she could get just the advice she wanted so badly at that time.

The medium says he will try to do what he can for her in that direction, but he is not very sanguine of success. He purposely says this because he knows that when he plays his next card his victim will think he is wonderful! He professes to be able to get into touch with the spirit of the deceased person whose advice is so badly needed. Perhaps he will hold a little séance; his victim hears the very voice she wanted to hear! And the voice says the very thing she wanted it to say. All is well, she thinks, but——

All is not well. The medium smiles to himself. Unknown to his victim he has two strings to his bow—two occupations, the second even more profitable than the first. He asks for a high fee for the séance, and if the victim hesitates about paying it the medium hints that some people would be very glad to pay for the information which he—the medium—has in his possession. Maybe his victim has written him a few foolish letters; in any case, even without any proof in writing, he has ample power for extracting the last farthing that his victim is able to find for him. He makes no secret of the fact—he can afford to be blunt now—that he wants money—otherwise——

The victim takes the hint and pays for the séance. She thinks that the whole matter is now settled. But, to the medium, the fun is only beginning. He just wonders how much his victim is good for and then proceeds to blackmail her until she has paid over that amount.

Perhaps the bogus medium will even go a step further. I have heard of one of these rogues in America who ran a club, to which he gave a pretty name, the name of a flower. We will call it the Bluebell Club, because that is not its name. The medium suggests that if his client will belong to his nice club she will have many opportunities for meeting her lover privately. It is such a nice place for appointments, interviews, quiet chats, lunch and dinner, and so on. There is usually a high entrance fee, but the kind medium offers to forego that because he is so interested in the lady's case. But

of course there is the yearly subscription—in advance, please—always in advance!

And so the foolish woman pays once more and if she is so foolish as to go to the club she soon finds what kind of club it is—a luxurious brothel run by the medium for the benefit of men who have money and no morals. The poor dupe soon finds that she has been “done” and if she tries to get out of that club quickly she will also find that she is unable to do so. If she threatens to give the whole thing away to the police the medium can afford to smile. He knows quite well that the woman would only be incriminating herself.

One can guess the end of that drama. It is a tragedy, a real tragedy, for the end is inevitable. The woman soon finds herself without a husband, without her lover, without money. But there is always the “Bluebell Club” for her—that is to say, for as long as she remains young and attractive.

Perhaps I have said enough to show that the whole business of the bogus medium is squalid, beastly, detestable and that even the woman who has the misfortune to be tied by marriage to a thoroughly bad husband has a far better life than the woman who puts herself in the power of a bogus medium. The net of the bogus medium is spread so carefully and cleverly that his victims soon find, to their life-long sorrow, that there is no way of escape.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SOME EXPERIMENTS IN GHOST HUNTING

DURING the course of my researches into the subject of survivalism, I have encountered a good many ghosts, real and otherwise. I have known ghosts formed apparently from the air; from that mysterious substance ectoplasm, which exudes from the corporal orifices of certain mediums; even from abstract qualities drawn from the bodies of the sitters—including my own. I have seen crudely formed “ghosts” made from flannel and luminous cheesecloth concealed on the “medium’s” person; I have seen the “ghost” of a baby above my head, knowing all the while that it was but an inflated bladder which had previously been hidden in the case of a dummy watch.

There are ghosts and ghosts, and the more I see of them, the more I am inclined to believe that the man-made “ghosts” far outnumber the genuine spirit presence. That, incidentally, is precisely what a “ghost” is—nothing more and nothing less than the spiritual part of the human body, the essential *life* which animates the physical shell. A ghost may or may not show itself to the observer; more often it does not, preferring to demonstrate its presence in other ways. Thus, we may hear a voice; or see objects moved. We may even “smell” a presence. There are many different types of phenomena known to psychic investigators which are indicative of the presence of a spiritual entity.

But the man in the street uses the word “ghost” in a particular and restricted sense. It implies *visibility* of the spirit presence; and quite often that presence is of an objectionable, or even nauseating, nature. There is the old Christmas tradition of the ghost which “haunts” an ancient building, moaning and sighing, rattling chains, and perhaps carrying

its head beneath its arm. Or it may be the vision of a fair lady who in other times preferred the loss of life to the loss of virtue; or, perhaps a sweet, curly-headed child, whose earthly existence in the long ago was terminated by a wicked uncle for reasons of inheritance. These particular ghosts invariably haunt particular buildings or estates. Few people can take them seriously. That is not to say, however, that all of them are unreal. The late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle certainly believed in them, and in Spiritualistic circles a number of well authenticated cases have been brought forward from time to time. It was because of this that the Psychic Investigation Council of the Magicians' Club, London, of which I am a member, decided, if possible, to appropriate a ghost to themselves.

We were quite serious in this intention. We wanted to purchase a "haunted" house, interview the "ghost" as if it were a normal flesh and blood being, and obtain as much information as possible concerning that type of phenomenon. We advertised in a London newspaper that we were prepared to pay £3,000 for any type of building in which a ghost could be *seen*. The condition of the building did not worry us. The one stipulation was that the ghost should be seen by a representative of the Club Council before the purchase was made.

We received many hundreds of letters from all parts of the world, and ninety per cent of them guaranteed the visibility of their ghosts. This was exactly what we wanted. I was elected to represent the Council in a tour of investigation of Britain; and in the course of some three or four months, I visited nearly a score of "haunted" houses.

One of my first cases was at Ipswich. It seemed that a family of five, living in an old house, were troubled not by one ghost, but *three*. Up to the time of my investigation, the most troublesome of the trio was an old monk. According to the report I received, he was in endless misery, moaning, sighing, wringing his hands and so on. His presence could be partially accounted for by the fact that the house was built on the site of an old monastery.

There was no such satisfactory reason to account for the



LOUIS GAUTIER

President of the Magicians' Club, an amateur magician of extraordinary skill and a leading expert on old china



presence of the other two ghosts. These were two modern young men, attired in up-to-date evening dress. From all the accounts, they were out to cause as much annoyance, in a more or less harmless manner, as they could. They took an impish delight in banging with their fists and feet on the walls, the floors, the landing, and the stairs. They were indeed Bright Young People.

Four members of the household had seen all three ghosts. The householder himself admitted that he had seen none. His wife, however, had actually held verbal conversation with the monk. The latter declared at first that he did not know why he was bound to the house, or why he was condemned to haunt it. He had been, it was surmised, an inhabitant of the ancient monastery, and the style and atmosphere of the present house utterly perplexed and bewildered him. He was in the greatest misery because there seemed no way of escape.

Persistent questioning revived the old man's memory, and eventually elicited a confession from him. He declared that during his lifetime he had violated and murdered no fewer than seven nuns from an adjoining convent, and buried them in the monastery grounds. During his lifetime he had not been troubled by conscience, but unfortunately for him the nuns were missed, and the crimes were traced to him. Religious ruling forbade that he should be hanged or executed; he was condemned to the more unpleasant alternative of imprisonment in the stocks, and death by slow starvation.

At the request of the monk, prayer meetings were held by the members of the household, and these seemed to afford him a good deal of relief. His appearances became less and less frequent. The prayers had no such effect on the two young men, however, who continued to bang and thump in all parts of the house. Incidentally, they seemed quite unapproachable, and nothing was known that could account for their presence.

I sat with two other investigators and heard the noises for myself. They were certainly very loud, and appeared to emanate mostly from the ceiling. As far as I could make

out, there was no coherence or system in the sounds; they were just haphazard slaps and bangs, such as I had heard dozens of times before. The culprits refused to appear, and I had perforce to continue my investigations elsewhere.

One of the most extraordinary ghost stories I heard in connection with my search, was brought to my notice in a town in the Potteries. I called at a house on the receipt of a letter from the woman householder, who told me that the ghost was on view at any hour of the day or night. On asking that it might be shown to me, the woman pointed to herself, and said :

“Yes! Here it is—inside my body. It is there all the time. It never leaves me.”

Naturally, I was taken aback, but inquired if the woman had any clue to the identity of the ghost. She replied readily :

“Certainly. It is the ghost of William Shakespeare!”

Perplexed, I asked for further information.

“Shakespeare is inside me all the time,” I was told. “He lives entirely through me. He tells me what he wants to eat, and I am compelled to regulate my food accordingly. Twice he has pushed me over—yes, on to this hard stone floor—because I have disobeyed his instructions. He is speaking all the time—now!—inside me. If you had a pair of earphones, you could apply them to my back and hear what he is saying. He appears to have developed an intense dislike for you since you have been speaking to me. He calls you an enemy. . . . When I am alone with him, he often acts and dances and recites. Really, he is quite amusing. Sometimes his mother comes to assist me in my household work. She is a very practical woman. Oh yes, I owe a good deal to her. . . .”

I dismissed the story as altogether too fantastic, but there was an almost unbelievable sequel. As I left the house, the woman’s last words were :

“Shakespeare is very angry that you refuse to believe in him, and that you have tried to interfere. He says I am to tell you that he will soon repay you. . . .”

Less than a fortnight later, my home in Buckinghamshire

became the scene of some very disturbing phenomena, which I believe was psychic in origin. At night, there were raps on the walls and ceiling of my bedroom. When I switched on the electric lamp, they became decidedly fainter, but still persisted. Once, as I lay in the darkness, I felt my bed unaccountably shaken, and in the morning I found it had been moved a distance of two feet from the wall.

Was it "Shakespeare"? Well, I should hardly credit that. It was, I think, just another example of the long arm of coincidence.

Another case I investigated was at Pontypool, where a hundred and fifty years old house was reputed to be very curiously haunted. It was a glorious summer morning when I called, and from the lounge, where I was asked to wait for a few moments, I was able to admire a beautifully fresh lawn, bathed in bright yellow sunlight. The french-windows were open, and very gradually I became aware of a smell of damp decay. It got stronger and stronger until it was well-nigh unbearable. When the mistress of the house entered the room, it entirely vanished.

She told me the story of her ghost. It had the appearance of an old man, disagreeable of expression, and dressed in old-fashioned clothes of an indeterminate period. He arrived, in traditional style, at midnight, and announced his presence by turning on the bathroom tap. He then walked clean through the closed door of the mistress's bedroom, exhibited himself to her for a few moments, and then completely dissolved into the walls of the room. For my part, although I waited a considerable time I saw nothing of this mysterious visitor.

I investigated a somewhat similar case at Chiswick, London, in company with Sax Rohmer, the novelist. The apparition was that of a very old man, smelling vilely. He stalked from room to room, making grimaces at the occupants of the house, sometimes threatening them with his stick. But Sax Rohmer and myself remarked on a certain foetid quality in the atmosphere of the house, but this may have been due to dampness. At all events, we saw no sign of a ghost.

Perhaps the most interesting of all my cases was that which I have set down in my notes as The Mysterious Lady of Brighton. The basement of what is now a hotel at Brighton is reputed to be haunted by the ghost of a most beautiful young woman, dressed in the style of a century or more ago. She appears and disappears through the solid wall—never by any chance by way of a door or window. She is always in great misery, and her hands are very often raised in a gesture of despair. Less frequently there appears the vision of a small boy, apparently dressed in the clothes of the same period. The two visions are never observed simultaneously; usually the woman appears first, disappears, and then a few seconds later, the boy is observed, running from room to room, frantic in his search for somebody—perhaps his mother.

Again, I must confess that though I waited, in company with two other investigators, for some hours, I observed nothing. Subsequent investigations I made seemed to substantiate a good deal of the story that had first been reported to me. Three or four people who frequent the hotel cellars declared that they often saw both the woman and the child. A porter who slept in the basement said that on three or four occasions the bedclothes had been snatched from his bed in the middle of the night. And a carpenter whose workshop was nearby told me that he sometimes saw the figure of the mysterious lady passing into the walls of the cellar in full daylight.

There was, in this instance, an explanation concerning the ghostly presences, and I set it down for what it is worth. On the present site of the hotel, there once stood a very large mansion, of which the original cellars still exist, forming the basement of the hotel. This mansion was said to have been the residence of the mistress of one of the Hanoverian Georges (probably George II, but I could get nothing definite on this point). For some reason, it was essential that the mistress should be done away with; she was murdered, and her body was bricked up in the cellar walls. Her boy, about ten years of age at her death, mysteriously disappeared at the

same time, it being given out that they had been sent abroad for diplomatic reasons.

I am prompted to remark about this story that if it isn't true, it ought to be! I am not unhopeful that some time in the future I shall be able to renew my investigations in this case, and perhaps allay the fear and despair of the beautiful and mysterious lady of Brighton.



## CHAPTER XV

### A MISCELLANY OF MAGIC PERFORMED BY FAMOUS ILLUSIONISTS

#### A VANISHING LAMP

*Designed and Described by Louis Nikola*

**T**HIS is a variant of a magical classic presenting points of novelty both in effect and mechanical detail.

In the first place the lamp is much larger and more substantial in appearance than that usually the subject of tricks of this class. The body is of brass and the shade an expansive one of silk and lace, of the type usually associated with big pedestal lamps. At the outset the lamp, burning, stands upon a pedestal. Unlike other forms of the trick working on this basis, the pedestal is an open one and presents a clear view underneath.

In presentation the trick takes the form of a juggler's hoax. The performer first covers the lamp with a square of thin material, having a hole in its centre to pass over the glass chimney, and permitting the light to remain evident beneath the covering. Lifting the covered lamp from its support, he makes an elaborate pretence of balancing it upon the end of a slender six-foot pole. Lifting the pole he balances it upon his finger-tips. At this exciting point, as though by accident, the pole loses its equilibrium, falls forward, and the lamp—quietly disappears.

The sophisticated reader does not require to be told that the body and shade of the lamp remain behind in the pedestal, and that a skeleton framework distending the covering cloth in the similitude of the lamp and a pillar carrying the light are alone "balanced" on the pole, that the pole is a hollow tube and that at the moment of disappearance the framework collapses and the pillar and light disappear into the tube.

It is only necessary to elaborate the particular details that effect all this.

The pedestal, as has been said, is open; it is, in fact, an ordinary palm-pot pedestal with four legs. On a platform beneath is a blue and white Japanese jar, and immediately under the pedestal top a fretted panel backed with bright coloured plush. Neither the space covered by the panel nor the jar is large enough to contain the lamp, and moreover it is apparent that nothing can fall into the jar without being seen, for there is distinctly a clear space above the mouth of the jar, and this space is never covered. At least so it seems to the spectators. But in reality it is a permanent enclosure. Within and above the white jar extends a tube externally covered with black velvet, which tube extends upwards to the bottom of the square space enclosed by the fretted panels. Thus there is a space of concealment equal to the distance between the pedestal top and the bottom of the jar. Lengthy though this hiding-place is, it is all necessary for the reception of the lamp; for the lamp has a shade of far greater diameter than the pedestal itself. It is formed upon loosely hinged ribs which fold upwards like a badly behaved umbrella in a wind-storm.

Before entering into greater details on the subject of the lamp construction we must explain the optical part of the illusion whereby the covered-in portion of the tube is non-existent to the eye of the spectator. This is accomplished by the simple expedient of standing the pedestal in front of an ordinary black and gold Japanese folding screen. This appears to be merely for decorative effect, and indeed, decoratively it serves a useful purpose in showing up distinctly the outline of the lamp. With the pedestal standing in one of the angles of the folding screen the whole thing presents a most innocent appearance, and the deception is perfect even at a couple of yards.

Considering now the mechanism in greater detail, the lamp body is provided with a central tube running throughout its length. This tube is velvet lined and slides silently over another tube forming a pillar erect from the bottom of the

pedestal-pot and extending upwards to the top of the pedestal itself. This same tube screws into a broad flange fastened by three bolts passing through the bottom of the pot and the pedestal platform whereon it stands. Between the bottom of the pot and the surface of the platform are rubber washers three-eighths of an inch thick. These yield sufficiently under the tightening and loosening of the three bolts to allow of exact vertical adjustment.

Three bent wires extend upwards from the gallery of the lamp and support the framework of the shade. This consists of six ribs hinged to a flat metal ring, the ribs being pivotted in slots, with stops beneath to maintain their angle. Pressure from below forces them upwards. The necessary pressure is provided by the enclosed space of the pedestal as the lamp falls through the top. To hide its passage a double-flap trap is made in the top of the pedestal. The flaps are of the thinnest and lightest possible material, so that springs sufficiently light to yield under the weight of the lamp will suffice to raise them after the lamp has fallen through. A simple bolt, upon the underside of the pedestal top, operated from the rear, serves to keep the trap closed and the lamp supported. The central tube within the lamp projects a half-inch below its base, and in setting the apparatus, fits over the guide pillar within the pedestal, a small semi-circular gap being cut in each half of the trap to admit of this.

After the lamp is placed in position the pillar carrying the light is lowered into the central tube. To prevent it falling through the rod forming the guide pillar, the latter is plugged at about an inch from the top, forming a socket for the light pillar to rest in. The light pillar itself is shown in detail in Fig. III. It consists of a tube, fitted with a screw cap at its lower end. Herein is inserted a miniature oil lamp supported by a spiral spring from below, and kept from rising too far by a collar at C. The portion of the tube above C and reaching nearly to the top is machined out in three broad slots, leaving space for the flame to burn in and supports for the extreme end of the tube. At this upper end a gallery is turned on the model of an umbrella frame centre. Six ribs are hinged

thereto in exactly the same manner as in the construction of an umbrella frame. At the opposite ends these are pivotted to a second set of ribs, and these again are folded back and their opposite extremities again hinged to another gallery, a counterpart of the first. This gallery carries a short length of glass tube to represent a lamp chimney. A wire rod "A" attached to the centre of the moveable gallery passes into the lamp pillar, this end terminating in a loop which is gripped by the catch "B". A spiral spring tends to force this gallery away when the catch is withdrawn. Fig. III shows the fake set for use. The dotted lines show the wall of the supposed "stick" upon which the imaginary lamp is balanced. Directly the fake falls low enough, the catch strikes upon the mouth of the tube and is operated by the force of the shock. The ribs representing the form of the shade, impelled by the spring, partly open and the weight of the light-pillar falling against the pressure of the tube wall completes their movement, drawing the whole fake into a straight line and out of sight within the tube.

Only one other detail remains for explanation. The balancing stick is a metal tube about six feet long and is divided in the centre by a screw joint for convenience in packing. The form of release for the lamp fake is shown in Fig. IV. Close to the upper end is a pivotted bracket working through a slot in the tube. Below it, along the side of the tube, is a spring bolt slotted at its outside end. This slot holds one arm of the bracket, maintaining the other horizontally, thus forming a stop for the lamp fake when placed in the end of the tube. Withdrawal of the bolt allows the whole bracket to swing round and the lamp pillar to drop within the tube.

This form of catch makes the minimum projection upon the outside of the tube. A thin cord attached to the lower end of the bolt is passed down the side of the tube and is attached to another bolt (Fig. V), of convenient shape to be operated by pressure of the thumb as the pole is balanced upon the finger-tips.

Owing to the length and weight of the metal tube the

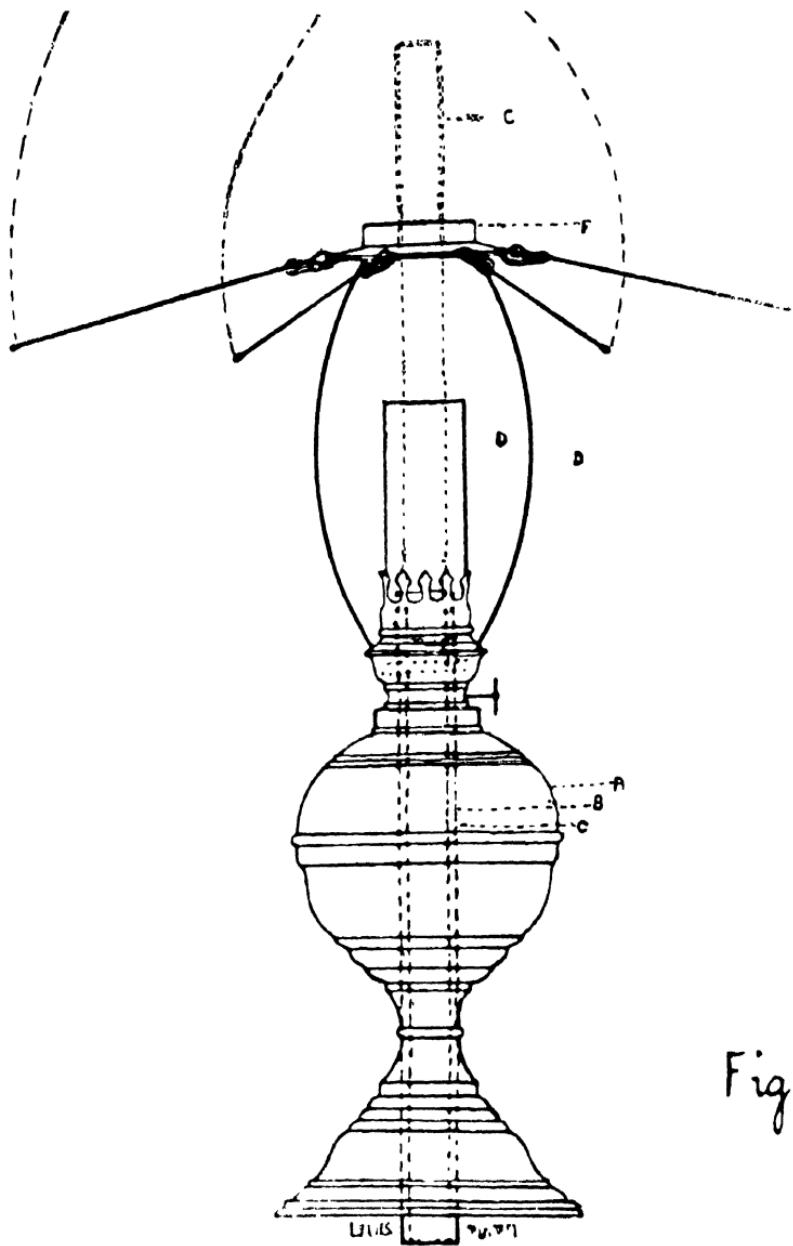


Fig. I

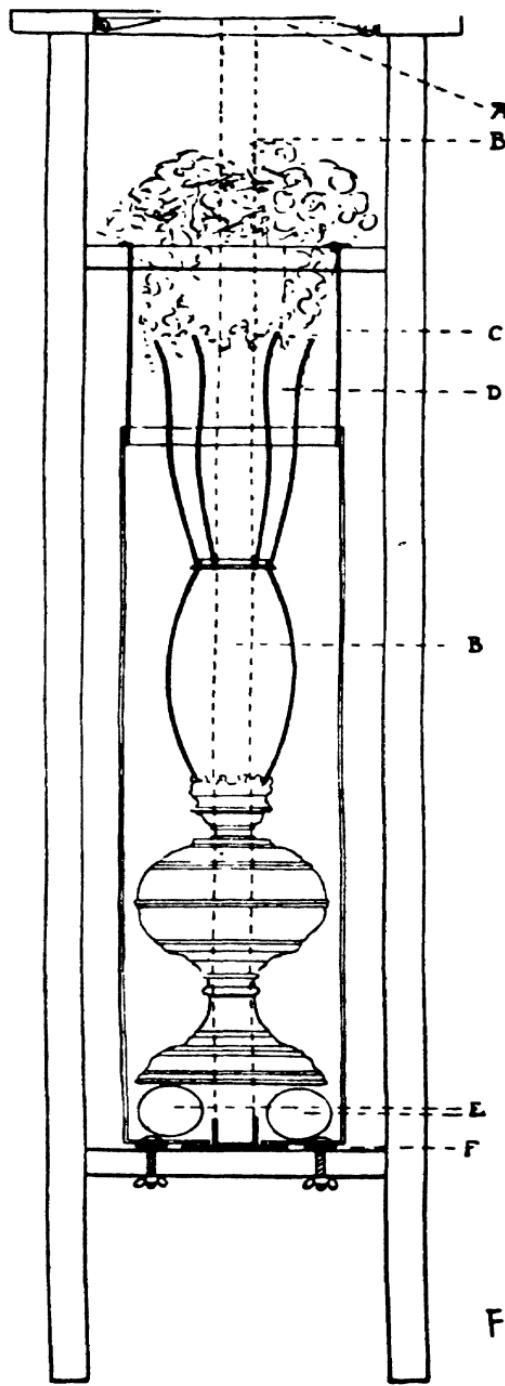
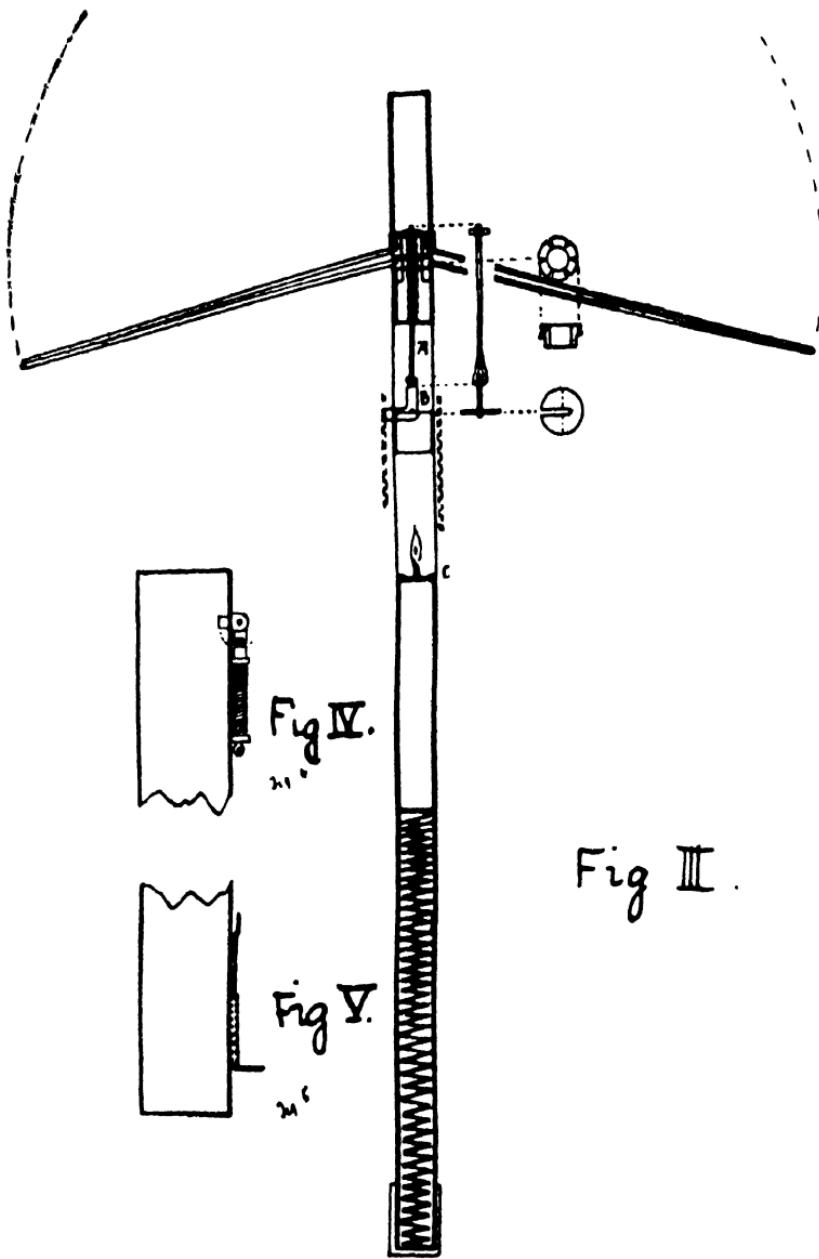


Fig II

242.



balance is a perfectly easy one, even to a person unskilled in juggling feats.

A division of the cord is effected (when it is desired to dissect the tube for packing) by the use of a small ring and spring swivel hook.

An alternative method of construction can be followed by substituting for the system of hinged ribs a set of six wires (knitting needles are best for the purpose) bent at an angle at half an inch from one end, the bent-over portions fitting into six equi-distant holes bored for their reception in a fixed gallery immediately below the gallery (in this case also fixed) supporting the chimney-glass. The wires are connected by a frill of the material of which the lamp shade is made up, and of which, when in position, it seems to form a part. The wires are held in position radially by slots cut in the surface of the gallery from the holes to the outer edge. When the light pillar falls into the balancing pole the wires become detached and remain behind in the covering cloth.

Each plan has its recommendation. The first is more perfect as a mechanical device; the second is simpler and therefore less liable to derangement.

These references may assist in following the details of structure:

Fig. I. *The Lamp.* "A" is the lamp body; "B," the velvet-lined tube running throughout the same; "C," dotted outline indicating relative position of light-pillar; "D," short mica chimney to shield flame from draught; "E," wire supporting shade frame—there are three of these, equi-distant; "F," the framework of folding shade.

Fig. II. *The Pedestal.* "A," the trap; "B," the central guide-pillar; "C," the black velvet-covered enclosure; "D," the shade in folded condition; "E," hollow rubber balls to act as buffers; "F," rubber washers to aid vertical adjustment of central guide-rod, as explained in the text.

**NOTE:** It is natural for a conjurer to overlook the obvious. The obvious method of constructing the lamp-fake in this case is to hinge a single set of ribs to the light-pillar and, at first sight, the elaborate double-rib system illustrated in Fig. III is

seemingly purposeless. Experiment has shown it to be an essential to effective working for several reasons. In the original model of the illusion the tube which swallows the fake, and represents the balancing pole, is exceedingly slender, being only one inch in diameter; this might be increased one-half without sacrificing much in effect, and would render construction easier.

#### THE CUT AND RESTORED TREASURY NOTE

The performer offers a dozen envelopes on a tray to a member of the audience and asks that one may be chosen. The chosen envelope is initialled by the chooser and the performer holds it in such a way that everyone can see that the envelope is not changed.

The performer then asks for the loan of a £1 note. While this is being produced the performer fastens down the flap of the envelope and, with a long pair of scissors, cuts off both ends, making a flat tube of paper. The performer then puts the borrowed note into the envelope, so that an equal portion protrudes from each end. After this has been done the performer shows both sides of the envelope, thus convincing the audience that the note is really inside it.

Explaining that he wants to find the exact centre of the note, the performer folds the envelope in half, inserts one "leg" of the scissors between the two halves, and cuts slowly and deliberately right through the envelope and, apparently, through the note. The performer puts the scissors down on the table and with his right hand draws off the right hand portion of the envelope and places it behind the half held in the left hand. With his right hand the performer then draws out the note, showing it intact, and returns it to the owner. Finally the performer tears the two halves of the envelope into pieces, drops them on the table, and shows his hands empty.

The main secret of the trick is in the envelope. All twelve envelopes which the performer offers to a member of the audience with a request that one may be taken are specially prepared for the trick, but the preparation is invisible to any-

one looking at the outside of the envelopes; they appear to be "ordinary" envelopes.

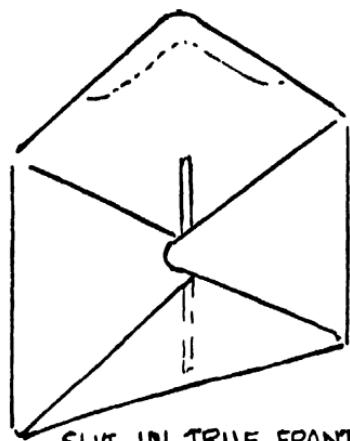
Each envelope is prepared in the following way. An opening three quarters of an inch wide is cut from the top to the bottom of the front of an envelope—the address side. Over this is neatly and accurately pasted the front only—without the flap—of a second envelope, but only the extreme edge is pasted down at the left hand side (front facing the performer); on the right hand side of the opening the whole of the front is pasted down.

Directly an envelope has been chosen the performer takes it at once to prevent too close an examination of it, gathers up the others, puts the chosen envelope on the top and asks the spectator to initial it boldly on the front.

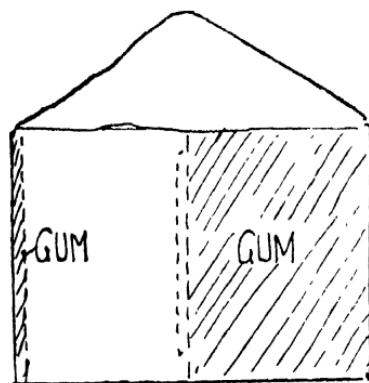
While the note is being produced the performer fastens down the flap of the envelope and cuts off the ends. This releases the half of the extra front which has been stuck down by the edge only, but the performer takes care to keep this pressed down flat with his finger.

Having casually shown both sides of the envelope the performer turns it so that the front is towards himself and transfers his hold to the edges, still taking care not to let the half flap at the back bulge away from the envelope. The performer then presses the top and bottom of the envelope so as to make it gape at each end, and he inserts the note, so that an equal portion protrudes from each end. The grip is now transferred again to the ends of the envelope which is held tightly between the finger and thumb of each hand at the extreme edges. Both sides of the envelope can then be shown deliberately; there is nothing to cover.

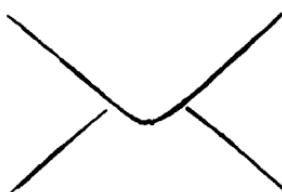
Explaining that he wants to find the exact centre of the note the performer doubles the envelope exactly in half, pressing the crease by running his finger and thumb along it. He then opens it out flat again, but with the left thumb retains the flap of the piece at the back of the envelope folded against the (original) left hand portion. It is only the right hand half of the envelope proper which is opened out to the right. Holding the envelope up in the left hand the performer



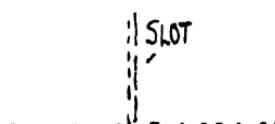
SLIT IN TRUE FRONT



FALSE FRONT GUMMED ON



AND  
ENDS CUT OFF



PASSES THROUGH  
SLOT AND  
DUMMY

CUT

FRONT.

pushes one "leg" of the scissors *between* the note and the front of the envelope facing the audience, the gap allowing of this. The envelope is then turned and partly doubled again, so that it hangs on the leg of the scissors, which are now held in a horizontal position. While the left hand now holds the two halves of the envelope together the performer makes one slow, deliberate cut right through the envelope and, apparently, through the note. The scissors are in the right hand. The performer lays the scissors on the table, slowly draws off the right hand portion of the envelope and places it behind the left hand half, holding it there with his left thumb. Then the right hand impressively draws out the note, holds it up so that everyone can see that it is intact, and hands it back to the owner. As a finale the two halves, still in the left hand, are torn across and across and dropped on the table, and the empty hands are displayed.

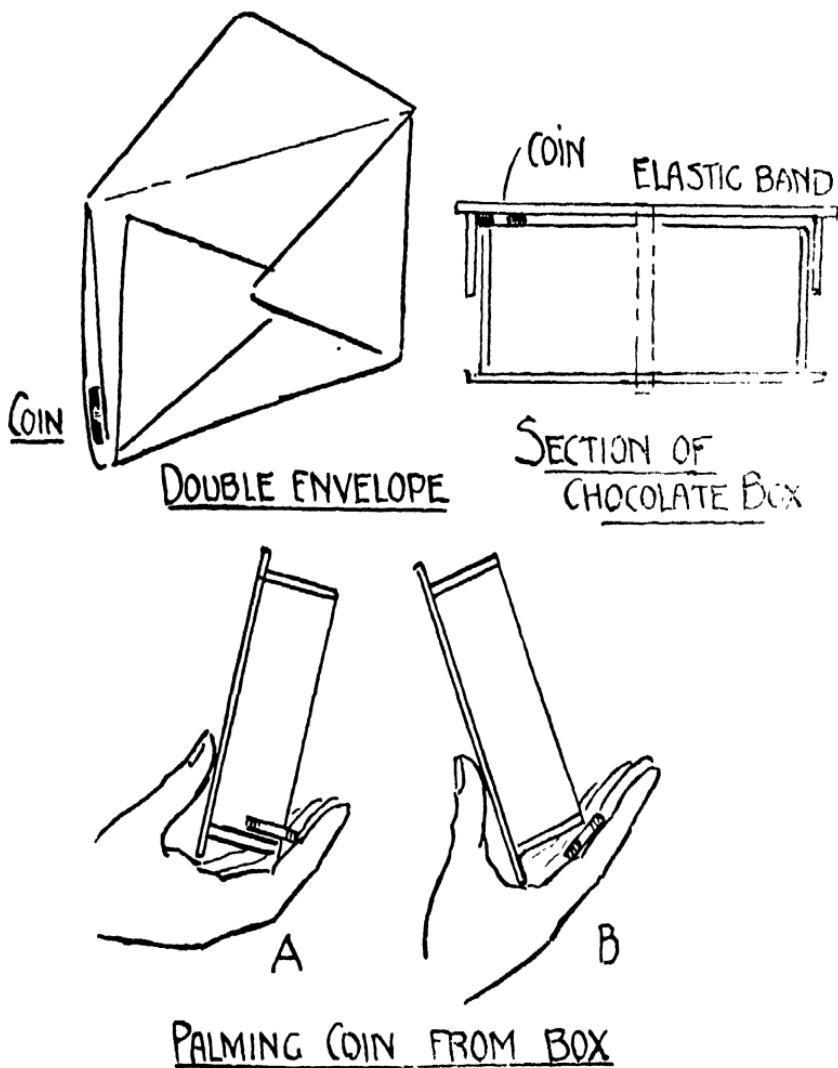
#### SHERWOOD'S COIN AND CHOCOLATE BOX

The following things are necessary for this trick. A wine glass, a large tumbler, a half-pound box (oblong shape) of chocolates (as wrapped and tied up when bought), an envelope, and an elastic band.

The trick is in two parts. The performer begins by exhibiting an empty envelope; he folds it into four and places it in the wine glass on the right side of the table. Anyone is at liberty to open the chocolate box, turn the chocolates on to a plate, and hand them round. A member of the audience now drops a borrowed and marked half-crown into the chocolate box. The performer slips an elastic band round the box, which he rattles before placing it on the tumbler on his left hand side.

A pass is made with the magic wand, after which the box is picked up, shaken, and opened by the performer. No rattle is heard and no coin is visible.

The performer then removes the envelope from the wine glass, clinks it against the edge of the glass and, after unfold-



ing it, withdraws the marked coin from the envelope and hands it out for identification.

That is the first phase of the trick.

The marked coin is now dropped into the envelope by the performer, who taps it with the wand, folds the envelope into four and hands it to a member of the audience who, himself, deposits the packet in the wine glass and places it on the table.

The performer now shows that the box is empty and that he has nothing in his hands. Then, after shutting the box, putting the elastic band round it and shaking it, he finally places it on the tumbler.

After another magic pass the coin is heard rattling within the box, which is then handed to a member of the audience, who extracts the coin, identifies it, and returns it to the owner.

The envelope is then shown empty.

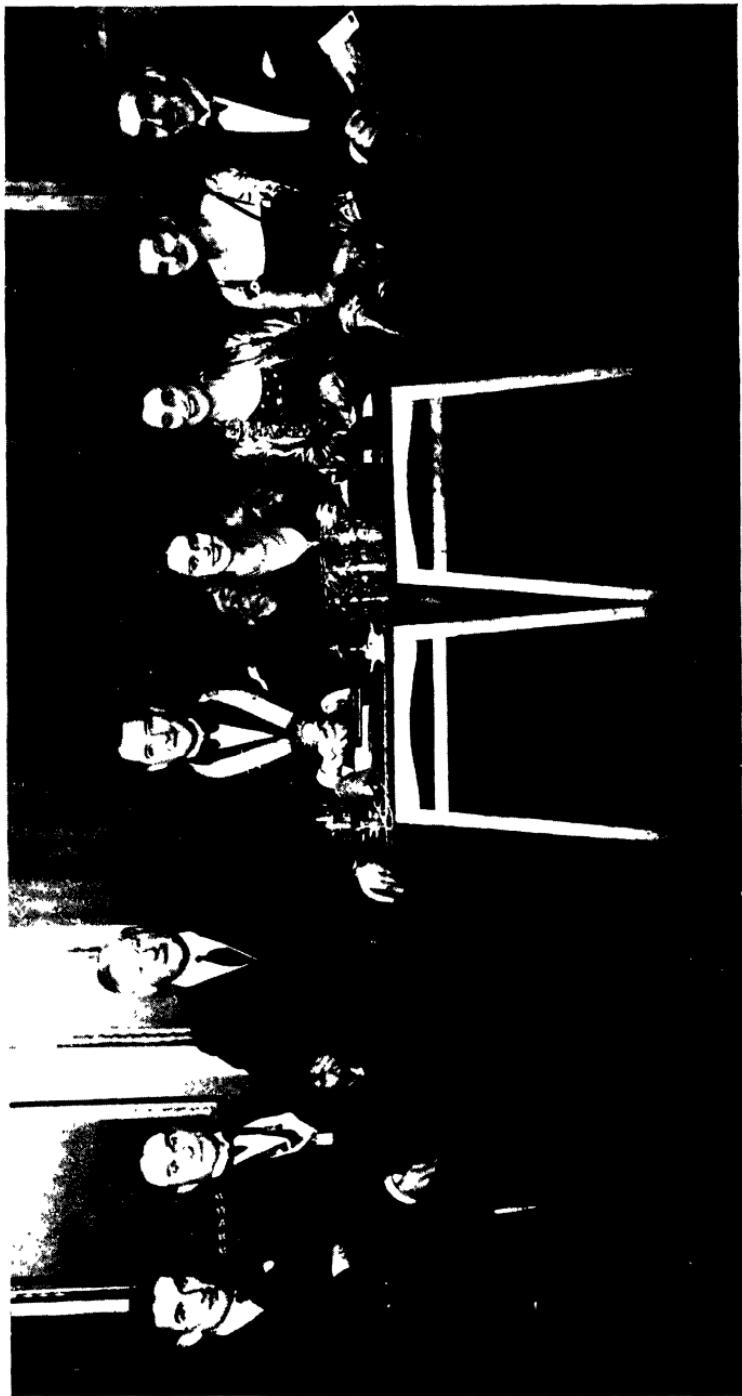
The trick is worked in the following way. The envelope is prepared by having the front of another envelope pasted inside it, but between the two papers a duplicate coin is concealed.

When shaking the box, prior to placing it on the tumbler, the performer jerks the coin upwards so that it is caught between the lid and top of the box at the right hand corner, where it will remain as long as the tension of the elastic band or the grip of the fingers holds it in position.

When the performer takes up the box to shake it after the pass he grasps it with the right hand, with the fingers underneath and the thumb on the spot where the coin is resting. On opening the box to show it empty the performer turns it over on his left hand, lifts the box away from the lid and, while exhibiting the empty box to the audience with the right hand, turns the lid over on his left hand (with the fingers of that hand) and so conceals the coin.

The box and lid are dropped on the table and the left hand picks up the magic wand. This movement helps the performer to conceal the coin in his left hand in a natural manner, the hand being partly closed over the wand.

The empty right hand approaches the envelope and clinks



ARTHUR PRINCE  
the famous ventriloquist, occupying the Chair at the Magicians' Club Cabaret



t on the glass; the left hand appears to take the coin from the envelope—a simple matter, since the coin is already in the left hand.

In the second phase of the trick the performer pretends to drop the coin into the envelope, but retains it in his hand while tapping the duplicate coin (after folding the envelope).

After showing the lid of the box with the right hand the performer, in the act of putting the lid on the box, secretly slides the coin into the corner of the lid where it is again trapped as before either by the fingers or the elastic band.

To make the coin rattle when handing the box to a member of the audience it is only necessary to raise the lid against the pressure of the elastic. The coin will then fall into the box.

#### WET PAINT

The performer directs the attention of the audience to a blackboard from which projects a short brass rod. Hanging on the rod are six black silk handkerchiefs. At the side of the stage is a small table with a pot of paint on it; there is a black label on the pot.

The performer asks a member of the audience to name any colour he pleases and he suggests a few colours—red, yellow, blue, etc. When the performer is told what colour has been chosen he puts a brush into the pot of paint and the label immediately changes to the selected colour. He then brushes the paint on his hand and passes his hand over one of the handkerchiefs which changes to the selected colour. Having done that, the performer places his outstretched hand on the blackboard, and the audience see an impression of the hand, in the selected colour, on the board.

The trick is repeated until five of the handkerchiefs have been magically dyed and five coloured impressions of the performer's hand are on the blackboard. Then a touch of comedy is introduced. The performer has arranged with a friend to call out "black" for the last colour, or he can pretend to hear someone ask for that colour.



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The performer puts the brush in the paint pot and the label changes back to "black". He paints his hand, but, naturally, when he draws his hand down the remaining handkerchief, the colour is not changed, and when he puts his hand on the board the audience see no impression there, for the hand is supposed to be black.

The painting is mere pretence; the performer puts nothing but the clean brush on his hand. The tin of paint is fitted with an inner tin through which passes a pivot rod; below the inner tin is an elastic-wound drum. By means of a pin on the brush, the performer is able to work a rocker release which allows the inner tin to fly round for a certain space. Thus, as the different labels are already on the inner tin and there is an opening in the outer tin the performer is able to change the label each time.

All the silk handkerchiefs are made on the well-known bag principle; by merely drawing the hand down the handkerchief, the colour is changed.

The board is double, and if the reader cares to experiment he will see how the different impressions of the hand are produced. The hand impressions are in readiness but are concealed by black masks. When the hand is placed on one of the spaces the mask falls and the coloured impression is seen.

#### A TRICK WITH GIANT CARDS

Good tricks with giant cards are scarce; here is an excellent one.

The performer goes down to the audience and invites twelve persons to take a card apiece; the holders of the cards are asked to look at them, remember them, and return them to the pack. The performer, taking a small writing-pad from his pocket, asks for the names of the cards taken and writes down each name on a leaf of the writing-pad; he then tears out the leaves and puts each one into a separate envelope.

The performer draws attention to an empty frame standing on his table; he then covers the frame with a handkerchief.

A member of the audience is asked to select one of the envelopes, open it, and read out the name of the card written on the slip of paper inside it.

The performer touches the pack with his wand and immediately spreads out the cards with their faces to the audience. The card which has just been named has disappeared from the pack. Whisking the handkerchief from the frame, the conjurer shows that the chosen card has travelled from the pack to the frame.

It will be seen that, although this effect is simple, there is more than one question to be answered before the whole trick is given away.

The card which appears in the frame—or, rather, a duplicate of it—is forced. Although the forcing of a card from a giant pack is rather more difficult than when ordinary cards are used, it is extremely unlikely that the performer will fail to force one card in twelve attempts. (It will be remembered that twelve cards are taken from the pack.) When the cards are being returned to the pack the performer shuffles them; in this way he gets the forced card to the top of the pack and he keeps it there.

To show the audience that the chosen card has left the pack the conjurer merely spreads out the cards and takes care not to separate the two top cards; the second card in the pack hides the chosen card.

Two or three of the top leaves of the writing-pad are unprepared, but on each of the next twelve sheets the name of the card to be used in the trick is already written. When the audience call out the names of the cards taken the conjurer appears to be writing the name of each one. A quick audience will follow the movements of the pencil. However, the conjurer does not really write down anything, because he uses an Eversharp pencil from which the lead has been removed! It will be seen, therefore, that the audience can have a free choice of any one of the envelopes, for the slips in them all bear the name of the card to be used in the trick.

The card which is to appear in the frame is concealed in a pocket in a newspaper on the table. The handkerchief

with which the frame is to be covered is first shown and then dropped over the newspaper; in picking it up the conjurer draws out the card, and in draping the handkerchief over the frame he can easily engage the two hooks at the top of the card on the top of the frame.

#### A STAGE "SPIRIT" CABINET

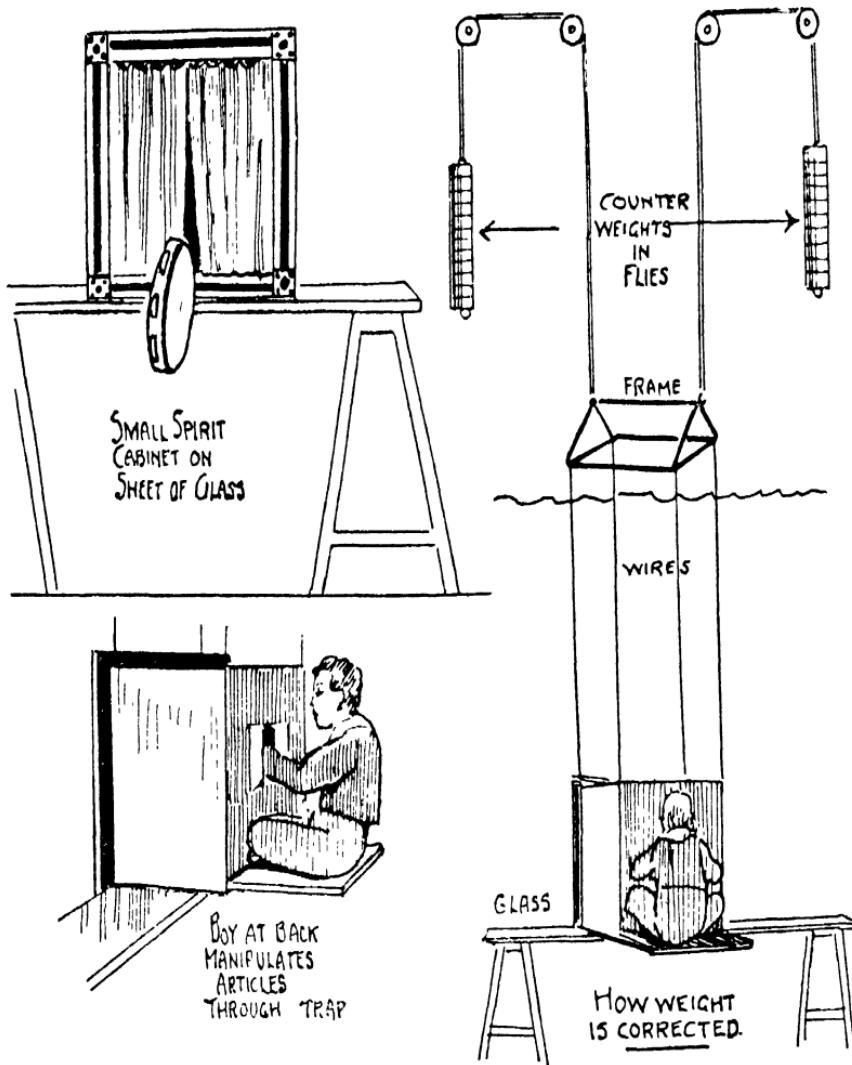
The effect briefly as follows: A small cabinet is lifted from a chair and placed on a narrow sheet of glass resting on two trestles. When the curtains are closed "spirit" manifestations take place. A borrowed handkerchief is placed into the cabinet; this is thrown out tied into several knots. Quite a number of suitable tricks may be produced with ordinary objects.

A trained boy assistant is concealed behind the cabinet, being on a small shelf there. Since it would not be possible for the performer to remove the cabinet with the assistant behind it without some very suspicious movements of his body and arms, he has to be helped in a secret manner. The necessary assistance is provided by invisible wires attached to the top of the cabinet. These are carried upward to the flies and across to the wings. At the end of the wires heavy counter-balance weights are fixed, so that directly the performer goes to pick up the cabinet, the counter-balance weights on the wires make his burden very light.

#### BERTRAM'S TRICK WITH A SHILLING AND A COPY OF "TIT-BITS"

Very seldom does one hear of a conjurer improving on another conjurer's trick to the extent to which Bertram improved on Verbeck's wedding-ring trick. Full particulars of Verbeck's trick are to be found in "More Magic", but Bertram's version was far in advance of the original trick.

Few ladies care to lend their wedding-ring to a conjurer.



That fact, no doubt, led Bertram to substitute a shilling for the wedding-ring; he also dispensed with the use of a stage assistant.

For the benefit of those who never had the pleasure of seeing Bertram perform what many people regarded as his best trick, I will describe the effect.

A shilling was borrowed. The owner was asked to mark it. A man was invited to come on the stage to assist in the trick. Bertram stripped the cover from a copy of *Tit-Bits* and invited the assistant to choose one of the halves. Bertram held the chosen half in his hand, while the assistant put the shilling under Bertram's thumb, which, of course, was on the top of the piece of paper. The conjurer then wrapped the shilling in the paper with one hand. Screwing up the parcel with both hands he handed it to his assistant with a piece of sealing wax. The assistant was asked to touch the back of his hand three times and then to open his hand. The parcel was found to have been converted into a large envelope made of the cover of *Tit-Bits* and fastened with sealing wax. This envelope was broken open and another sealed envelope was found. This one was broken open and a third envelope was drawn out of it. The third envelope contained a shilling, which the assistant was asked to identify.

The trick was repeated with the remaining half of the cover of the paper, but this time the assistant was asked to return the shilling to the owner, who identified it as his shilling. The assistant was then presented with the six envelopes used in the trick, but when he unfolded the parcel he found that the envelopes had changed into the original cover of the paper.

Bertram used to use his right hand trousers pocket a good deal in order to bring about his effects, but his manner was so natural, and his misdirection so excellent, that the general public were always completely mystified by this capital trick.

The best way to do this trick is as follows. The cover of the paper is lying on the table. Under the paper is the first set of envelopes rolled up into a ball. Come forward with a shilling palmed in the left hand and borrow a shilling from

Yours ever faithful  
Charles Bertram April 5<sup>th</sup> 1893.



CHARLES BERTRAM

The conjurer who taught magic to King Edward



someone in the audience. When an assistant has been secured change the shillings in the act of handing the coin to the assistant and drop the borrowed shilling into a flat tin tube. This tube is in the right hand trousers pocket and, of course, one end is inserted into the centre of the second nest of envelopes, which are placed in that pocket before the commencement of the trick. It is quite an easy matter to make the nest of envelopes in such a way that there is room for the tube although the envelopes are sealed. The envelopes are pasted down around the flat tube.

While the assistant is looking at the shilling—really the conjurer's shilling—the conjurer goes to the table and takes up the cover of the paper, at the same time palming the first nest of envelopes. The innermost envelope contains a shilling similar to that which the assistant is now holding.

The conjurer tears the cover of the paper in halves and gives his assistant the choice as to which half shall be used in the trick. Holding this half in his right hand, with the thumb on the top of the paper, the conjurer invites his assistant to place the shilling under his thumb. The paper is then screwed up into a ball, and in the act of passing it to the assistant the conjurer palms the ball of paper containing the shilling and hands the assistant the nest of envelopes. As the envelopes are also screwed up into a ball no one notices the change.

While the assistant is touching his hand with the sealing-wax and obeying the conjurer's instructions to open his hand and examine the contents, the conjurer has ample opportunities for dropping the parcel in his hand into his profonde and taking the second nest of envelopes from his right-hand trousers pocket. He does this in readiness for the second half of the trick.

The trick is repeated, and while the assistant is taking the last of the envelopes to the owner of the shilling the conjurer gets the rolled-up cover of the paper from his left-hand trousers pocket into his palm. He then suggests to the assistant that perhaps he would like to take the envelopes away with him, so that he can see how the trick is done. The conjurer

rolls up the envelopes into a ball, changes it for the rolled-up cover of the paper and—the trick is finished. The second portion of the trick is worked rather quickly.

#### THE DEVIL'S MIRROR

##### *A Mystery from Hans*

The performer borrows some visiting cards from his audience. One of them is chosen and is signed by the owner; the performer places this card in an envelope and rests the envelope against a candlestick on the table.

The performer then shows a small photograph-frame and removes the back so that the audience can see through the glass in the front. Having replaced the back, the performer rests the frame, with its back to the audience, against another candlestick on his table. He then commands the card to leave the envelope and travel invisibly to the frame. Picking up the envelope, he slits it open and shows that it is empty; then, turning the frame round to the audience, he shows that the card is now inside the frame. He takes the back off the frame, removes the card, and has it identified by the owner.

The envelope is prepared by having a small slit cut in the flap side. When the performer is placing the chosen card in the envelope he has the remainder of the visiting cards in his left hand, and he holds the envelope with the address side towards the audience in the same hand. Thus the chosen card really passes out through the slit in the envelope and is then on the top of the other cards, which are then placed on the table while the performer shows the frame.

The frame is a sand frame made with a back which can be removed. When the performer removes the back of the frame the sand is out of sight. He places the back of the frame on the top of the cards on the table, and as there is a small piece of soft wax on the back of the frame the top card—which is the chosen one—naturally adheres to it.

Having shown the frame to the audience, the performer picks up the back and, holding it with the card towards him,

replaces it in the frame. Then, turning the frame over, he allows the sand to run down and he can then show the front of the frame, which appears to be empty. In resting the frame against the candlestick, the performer can easily reverse it again, allowing the sand to run out of sight; then, when he turns the frame round, the card is seen and the back of the frame can easily be removed in order that the card may be identified.

## ANOTHER FOUR ACE TRICK

*By Stanley Collins*

Some years ago I set myself the following problem. From a *borrowed* pack of cards allow someone to remove the four Aces and place them face upwards on the table himself. On each of these aces the assisting party must put three ordinary cards, in turn face upwards, and then nominate any particular heap to be put on one side. The selected packet having been removed, the twelve cards on the table (three of which are Aces) are to be shuffled into the pack, from which a few seconds later the Aces must vanish, all four to be finally discovered in the selected heap.

I fancy I can hear some of my readers exclaim: "A pretty tall order, too, unless faked cards are used." I worked the trick out to get the exact effect I have indicated, and so practical was it that I performed it for quite a long time until I invented the experiment which took the place of the one I am now describing.

This is the way I consummated my problem. It will be perfectly obvious that as a stranger has to negotiate the preliminaries of the experiment, no trickery can transpire until after the 16 cards are in a position on the table. It is advisable to have the Aces but half-covered with the three ordinary cards, so that when asking the assisting gentleman to make a selection of one heap, as no forcing is necessary, you may address him as follows: "You, sir, have placed the four Aces on the table and have partially covered each with three ordinary cards. I must now ask you to choose one of these

Ace packets and shall be glad, therefore, if you will just say which one you prefer—Clubs, Spades, Hearts or Diamonds." It is a matter of indifference which is nominated. The three ordinary cards are picked up, shown to the audience and held between thumb and fingers of the right hand. The Ace is next exhibited and put on top of the three ordinary cards with its bottom edge touching but separated from them at the thumb end by a break of about one-third of an inch. The excuse for thus temporarily holding the cards is that a tumbler may be handed round for inspection with the left hand. This, on being received back, is placed at a point to *rear left* of performer and the chosen packet laid *on its side* against it.

So natural, however, is the sleight employed at this point of the trick, that the fact of but one card (the Ace) instead of four being lodged against the tumbler, is never suspected. As the success of the experiment depends upon the undetectable execution of this sleight, I hope my explanation of it will be intelligible. In the action of transferring the chosen packet from one hand to the other, the left thumb and finger grip the Ace only, and under cover of a half-turn to the left, the three ordinary cards in the right hand are bent double by allowing the thumb to slide to the opposite end of the Ace, this card thus being held at its ends with the thumb and finger of each hand. The Ace, taken now in the left hand, is stood against the tumbler *on its side* and with its back towards the audience.

Picking up the pack with the right hand, the three cards which were retained are added to the top, the performer covering the movement naturally by explaining that the three heaps remaining on the table will be shuffled into it. Taking the first packet, it is shown to consist of three ordinary cards and an Ace, all of which are placed on top of the pack, care being taken that the Ace is the top card of all. In the case of the second heap, however, the Ace is placed on top *first*, thus causing the two Aces to be together, and so soon as the three cards are added they are brought to the bottom by means of the double-handed pass. The last heap having been treated in the same manner as the second, the three Aces will be on

top. All that now remains is to shuffle the pack (taking care not to disturb the top stock), palm off the three Aces, and with the same hand display the Ace resting against the tumbler and the three palmed cards together.

The selected Ace reposing on its edge, allows the right thumb, when the cards are palmed in the same hand, to be passed under the bottom and all four spread fanwise simultaneously.

Instead of twice shifting three cards to the bottom by means of the double-handed pass, the Aces may be brought to the top by false shuffling.

The experiment, although requiring a certain amount of address, is by no means difficult to perform, and I confidently recommend it to those of my readers who are on the look out for "close quarters" tricks.

#### NESTED ENVELOPES AND RESTORED CARD TRICK

*By Stanley Collins*

Six envelopes numbered respectively 1 to 6, and graduating in size, are exhibited upon a like number of small easels. Having introduced a small transparent envelope, such as is used by photographers, and proved it to be without trickery, it is sealed down and placed into envelope marked 1. This is stuck down and deposited inside No. 2, which is likewise sealed up. This nesting business is proceeded with until all six envelopes are inside the larger one printed with a 6. This is entrusted to the care of a gentleman who is asked to write upon it an identifying mark to prevent any idea of duplication. From a pack of cards, one is selected by a member of the audience, who is requested to cut it into four pieces with a pair of scissors handed to him for that purpose. This done, one piece is selected and retained from the four, the three others being burnt or otherwise disposed of. The experiment culminates in the discovery of the chosen card, restored but for the one piece in the transparent envelope nested in the set of six, the envelopes being opened by the gentleman who

had possession of them throughout the experiment. The card and the corner are, of course, found to fit exactly.

To perform the trick, 11 envelopes will be required, viz.:

Two transparent ones, which should be the exact size of a card;

Two marked 1, a trifle larger than the transparent one;

Two marked 2, a trifle larger than No. 1;

Two marked 3, a trifle larger than No. 2;

One marked 4, a trifle larger than No. 3;

One marked 5, a trifle larger than No. 4;

One marked 6, a trifle larger than No. 5.

The first step towards preparation is to cut from a card a corner piece approximating about one-quarter of the whole. This card is placed into one of the transparent envelopes, stuck down and nested inside envelopes marked 1, 2 and 3. Leaving the remaining transparent envelope openly on the table, the six envelopes of different sizes are displayed on easels in order ranging from the smallest to the largest, as indicated by their numbers. Behind envelope No. 5, however, the set of nested envelopes lies hidden, the number facing the same way as the one which conceals it from view. The piece cut from the card should be comfortably bestowed in a right-hand pocket, so that it is instantly get-at-able. A pack of cards, with a duplicate of the mutilated one in such a position that it may be forced with readiness, together with a pair of scissors and a paper-knife, complete the list of requirements.

Having negotiated the "force" satisfactorily, and persuaded a gentleman to take, say, the four of diamonds, the pair of scissors is handed to him with the request that the card be cut into four pieces. Whilst he complies with these instructions, the right-hand palms the corner piece from the pocket, and as soon as the four pieces are handed to him the performer calmly adds the extra piece on top of those he has just received, and holds all five in the left fingers. Advancing to a lady seated on the *left* side of the room, the performer invites her to take the top piece. This she naturally

does with her right hand. The second piece she takes and holds in her left hand. In turning to a gentleman seated on the *right* side of the room the next piece is palmed away and the two remaining bits handed to the gentleman in question, who is requested to hold one in each hand. *Now, without giving any intimation* of his intentions, the performer asks the audience to nominate either the lady or the gentleman. The chances are very much in favour of the lady being selected, in which case "The right hand or the left?" is requested. Here, again, the chances are in favour of the performer, as the right hand is more likely to be selected. Taking these contingencies for granted, the two pieces held by the gentleman, and the piece in the lady's left hand, are consigned to the flame of a candle and the trick proceeds. But it so happens that it is a matter of indifference to the performer whether the lady or the gentleman be selected, and we will now suppose that the choice falls on the gentleman. The performer blandly takes the two pieces he holds, and remarks: "That disposes of those two. Now of the two pieces the lady holds, will you please signify either the one held in her left hand or her right. The left? Thank you! We will take that and destroy it with the other two." The forcing of the desired piece in this manner is novel and excites no suspicion.

Now to explain the subtlety in connection with the envelopes. The first step is to show the transparent envelope which, having been proved to be empty and without preparation, is stuck down and placed into the smallest of the numbered envelopes, viz., that numbered 1. This done, No. 2 is picked up with the left hand and No. 1 laid upon it so that the difference in the size may be demonstrated. This done, No. 1 goes inside No. 2, and the latter stuck down, as in the case of the first one. No. 3 is next picked up with the left, and attention called to the fact that it is in turn a size larger than No. 2, the difference being illustrated in the same manner as in the case of Envelopes 1 and 2. Number 3, duly sealed up with the other envelopes inside, is placed into No. 4, the same move of comparison being

executed. The vital point of the trick comes with Envelope No. 5. This, *together with the hidden nest of three*, is held in the left hand, and the envelope numbered 4 compared with No. 5 by placing the former on the latter as already explained. In lifting No. 5 clear of No. 4, the duplicate nest is retained behind No. 4, whilst No. 5 is shown to be empty. *Both nests* are now placed into No. 5, the audience, of course, being cognisant of the existence of the nest of 4 only. No. 5 having been placed into No. 6, and the latter sealed down, the most difficult part of the trick is accomplished. As no exchange of the large envelope is necessary, the identifying initials on the outside enhance the effect of the experiment.

The cutting open of the envelopes is commenced by the performer, who himself opens envelopes numbered 6, 5 and 4. In the case of No. 4, however, when the end is slit open, instead of the nest of three being extracted from the interior of the envelope as the audience fondly imagine is the case, the duplicate set, which was taken out of No. 5, together with Envelope 4, is brought into view from behind as if it were coming from the inside. Discarding Envelope 4, *which contains the remainder of the set of envelopes sealed up in front of the audience*, the duplicate set is handed to the assisting gentleman with the request that he himself cuts open the rest of the packet. From this point, all is plain sailing, and it a significant fact that when expatiating upon this experiment after its performance, spectators will always aver that the gentleman cuts open all the envelopes. Judiciously-worded patter, coupled with careful presentation, will always accomplish this result.

In the method described above, each of the envelopes is shown to be empty before the smaller one is put into it, and I think the experiment is strengthened by this addition. Conditions, however, are not always favourable for a safe exhibition of the above moves, which must be performed squarely in front of the spectators. If any of the audience get a side view of the envelopes the trick must be detected. To perform the experiment under these latter conditions, I vary proceedings somewhat, the only difference in presentation being that the

envelopes are not shown empty as the trick proceeds. In this case I am provided with a duplicate of envelope No. 4, and the nest I have secretly prepared is inserted into this, sealed down and placed *inside* Envelope 5. This set of four is marked with an inked line on its upper edge which is quite visible when looking into the envelope which contains it but quite unnoticeable from an onlooker's point of view. The trick proceeds exactly the same as in the first method, with the exception that none of the envelopes on the easels are shown empty. Having nested the first four, these are placed into No. 5 (in which the duplicate nest of four lies hidden, unbeknown to the audience) and this straightway stuck down and put into No. 5. When opening the nest, No. 5 is removed and No. 6 thrown on the table. No. 5 is then opened and the nest of four *with the black edge* removed and slit open to remove No. 3. This is handed to the gentleman who slits open the remainder, and, of course, discovers the chosen card in the transparent envelope.

When I first performed this experiment, I used to number each envelope as I nested it with a piece of blue crayon. I find, however, the printed method is far preferable, as a very critical observer might notice some difference in the formation of a figure or figures on the respective nests.

#### STANLEY COLLINS'S MAGNETIC ACES

Although the effect of this experiment is familiar, the method employed is original. The four aces, separated by being placed one on each corner of a handkerchief or serviette, mysteriously congregate under one of two sheets of paper placed thereon.

The advantage of this method is that it is comparatively simple to manipulate, and requires the use of but one trick card. This takes the form of a double-back ace, one side showing as the Ace of Diamonds and the other as the Ace of Clubs.

Discarding the real Ace of Diamonds, the faked one is

so placed in the pack that it will be the third to be produced when removing the Aces from the bottom. As each one is found, it is placed upon one corner of a handkerchief.

Grasping the two sheets of paper, one in each hand, by the lower right-hand sides, the thumbs on the top and the fingers underneath, attention is drawn by "patter" to the fact that the pieces of paper are larger than the playing cards, the point being illustrated by simultaneously covering Nos. 1 and 2, and then 3 and 4 in like manner. Keeping 4 in the same position, the left-hand paper is moved to 1, thus making 1 and 4 covered. Now, the reverse process is manipulated, the paper in right hand being moved to 2, and that in the left hand to 3.

The crucial move of the trick has now to be performed, and it is accomplished thus:

The right-hand fingers secretly grasp the Ace of Clubs beneath the paper, and when shifting this paper to cover 4, the card is taken with it, the vacant space being immediately occupied by left-hand paper. If done with the requisite sang-froid, the movement is quite indetectable. Still retaining hold on the Ace of Clubs in the right hand, the paper is placed over 1, so that, unknown to the audience, two cards are at 1, whilst the paper at 2 covers nothing.

Proceeding with his "patter", the performer remarks: "As matters are at present, you will observe that the two black cards are covered, whilst the red ones remain visible. In order to equalize matters, I propose exchanging one of these red Aces for a black one, for that purpose placing the Ace of Diamonds under this paper, and bringing away the Ace of Clubs." This is apparently done.

"But," will inquire the reader, "at 2 there is no card at all, so how can an exchange be made?" In this way: The trick Ace of Diamonds, under cover of the paper, is merely turned over and withdrawn, showing the Ace of Clubs side. This most deceptive move answers a double purpose: it provides the necessary duplicate of the Ace of Clubs lying with the Ace of Spades at 1, and further serves to convince the audience that a card is really at 2.

As matters now stand, the Ace of Clubs exposed at 3 has on its opposite side the Ace of Diamonds which the audience imagine to be under the paper at 2. Taking this trick card in his right hand, the performer lifts the handkerchief with the left, the thumb above and the fingers well underneath, and thrusting the Ace of Clubs beneath, apparently pushes the card through the linen. In withdrawing the right hand, the card is turned over and left behind in the outstretched fingers of the left hand. After showing the right hand empty, the paper at 1 is lifted and passed into the left, which instantly lets go of the handkerchief and holds the concealed card beneath. The left hand now places the paper and the concealed card on 1, so that the Ace of Spades, Ace of Clubs, and the Ace of Diamonds are together, the latter of course, being unsuspected. The performer next announces that the Ace of Hearts shall force the Ace of Diamonds to join the pair at 1, at the same time sliding the Ace of Hearts under the paper at 2, *without lifting it*.

The wishes of the performer are seen to be fulfilled a second later, when the Ace of Hearts is shown to be alone at 2.

This, under cover of being shown both sides with the left hand, is crimped slightly as for "back-palming", the face, however, being the convexed side.

This enables the performer, when the paper is again dropped on the card, to clip the latter secretly between the first and second fingers. The left hand instantly lifting the paper from the assembled three aces, passes same into the right, which forthwith releases hold of its paper and grips the new one and the Ace of Hearts together. These are dropped over the three Aces, and the card presumably under the paper at 2, ordered to join the trio. Instantly the Ace of Hearts is shown under the left-hand paper and the other proved to cover nothing.

The only part of the trick likely to appear difficult is the passing of the last ace, but no apprehension as to its practicability need be feared if the move be executed correctly. When the convexed card is covered with the paper, the latter should

be held at its extreme lower right-hand corner, and the card just clipped between the first and second fingers. Now, if the exchange of papers is made by putting the left-hand paper into the right, with a sweeping downward movement, no glimpse of the extracted card can possibly be gleaned. Five minutes' practice will master the sleight.

The papers used should be about 7in. by 4½in., and of fairly stiff quality.

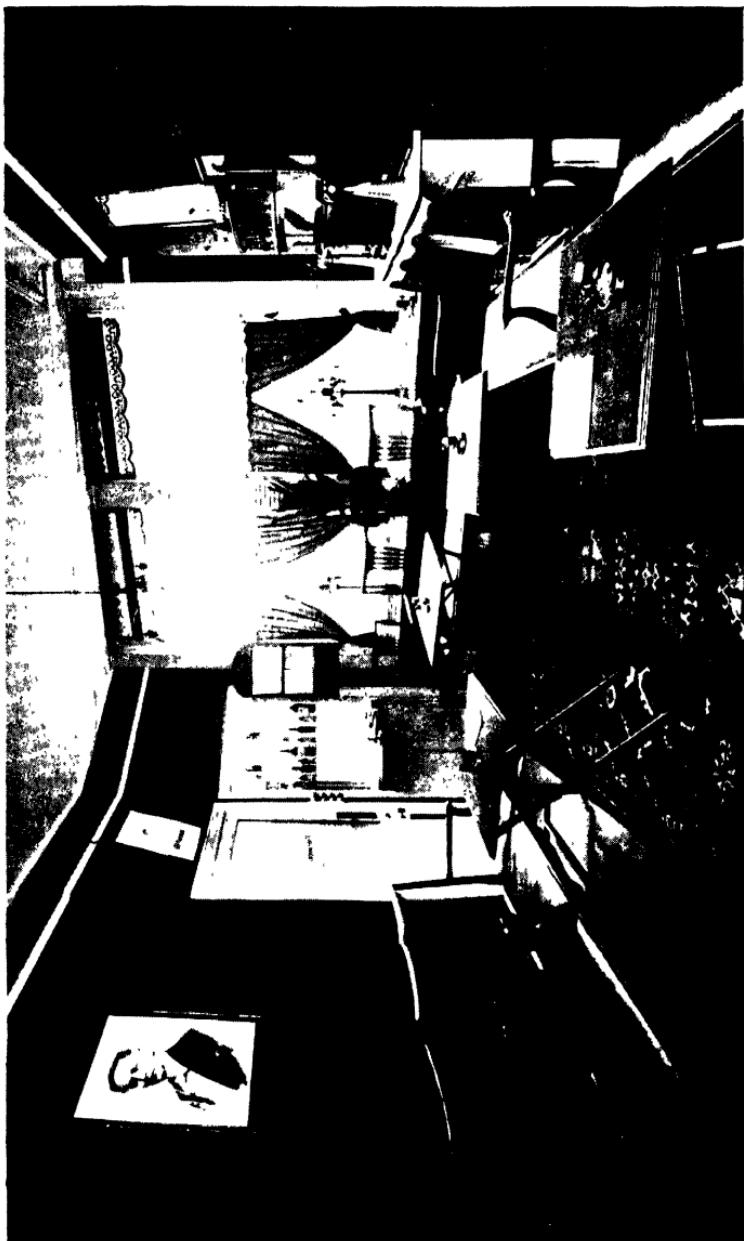
#### THE "ESSCEE" NAP HAND DEAL

The card conjurer who performs at close quarters will some time or other most assuredly be asked the question: "Can you deal yourself winning hands in ordinary card games?" If such a feat can be performed in response, I know of nothing in the range of card experiments to cause more astonishment; and this even with a blasé audience who accepts ambitious feats with indifference. The reason is not far to seek. Almost everyone handles cards nowadays, and the difficulty of securing certain cards to one's self under the stringent conditions imposed and accepted by card players is realized by the most unappreciative. Most card players have vague ideas that cards *can* be stacked and dealt to advantage by an unscrupulous player, but few deem such a feat possible when every precaution is taken to prevent manipulation.

The method I am about to describe for ensuring five winning cards being dealt to one's self in an ordinary game of "nap" possesses the advantage of being practically simple to perform, and allowing test conditions to be imposed. The pack is freely shuffled by any one of the four persons who share the play with the performer; they cut for deal, and one deals five heaps of five on the table. Now, although the performer himself has nothing to do with the shuffling or dealing, his five cards, when turned over, prove to be a "Nap-hand".

Audacity is the keynote of this experiment. Previous to the exhibition, the Ace, King, Queen, Jack and ten of any suit are removed from the pack and gripped in the bend of

THE MAGICIANS' CLUB'S  
first premises (reading-room and bar), 1911





the leg below the knees, where they are quite out of sight of the players as all sit at a table.

Obviously, it does not matter one little bit how the cards are shuffled or cut, or what cards fall to the lot of the performer, as he is prepared to exchange them for the "Nap hand" with which he has already provided himself.

The exchange is effected in a very bold manner. Whilst the dealer busies himself with his task and the attention of the others is riveted upon him, the five cards from behind the knee are secured by the performer in the right palm. So soon as the cards are dealt, the performer picks up his five from the table with the left hand and instantly adds those in his right hand on top of them, keeping the two packets separate, however, by inserting the end joint of the little finger between them as for the "double-handed shift". The shift is straightway made, and the winning hand dropped on the table whilst the others are palmed. It will be understood that these respective actions, which are the work of an instant, are well covered by judicious misdirecting remarks at the psychological moment. *Without commenting upon the fact*, the performer either removes the depleted pack from the table or shifts it to a position where it will be more out of the way of the players. Needless to say, the five palmed cards are added to the top as this is done, so that nothing may be left at the conclusion to embarrass the conjurer.

The maximum effect is gained by requesting that none of the heaps be lifted from the table until the performer signifies it to be done. Each player in turn, commencing with the one on the conjurer's left, is now asked to state how many tricks he thinks he is likely to make. All having "called", the performer calmly says: "Well, I will go 'Nap' without looking at my hand. I don't think anyone is likely to beat these." The five cards are then turned over to show they are all masters in one suit.

Although the trick is composed of the simplest possible elements, it requires confidence and address in no small degree to carry out. Properly presented, the fact of the cards being taken into the hands immediately after the deal is never noticed by the onlookers.

## THE CHUNG LING SOO SLATE TRICK

Slate tricks have again become the fashion. Many concert performers depend upon comedy to obtain laughs when they find their patter fails. I have often witnessed Cecil Lyle perform his very excellent Slate trick—his well chosen patter and misdirection is a showman's masterpiece.

I am often asked by magicians to give them something foolproof, and for the first time the secret of this master slate is given away. The diagrams clearly show that the moulding of both slates are removable. This is the essence of the secret. A pair of slates are passed for inspection, the slates are padlocked, and the keyholes sealed. The conjurer's assistant is blindfolded and enters a cabinet, or a screen is placed round her. The locked slates are now placed on her lap. "Spirit" music is called for, and the pianist plays "Another Little Drink", which immediately produces laughter.

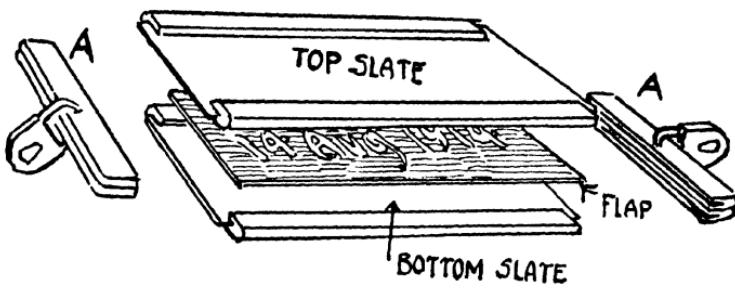
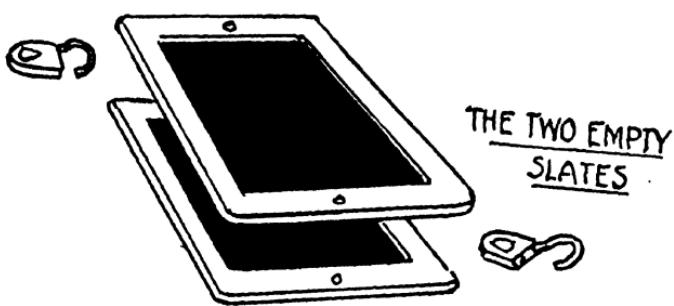
The slates are handed to the performer, who unlocks the padlocks after examination, when on one side of the slate is found to contain a "message", usually about some well known member of the audience.

The assistant in the cabinet simply pulls out the moulding at the ends containing the padlocks when a concealed flap containing the written message falls from the top slate to the bottom. It is then securely fixed and the moulding placed back into position. Chung Ling Soo passed this secret to me for publication.

## A NEW SPIRIT HAND

A glass case is seen on the stage. This is supported by eight brass rods, four at each end. The case has a trolley on which a wax hand is placed, thereby allowing it to run on a track like a small railway carriage.

A small glass bell is fitted in the centre of the case, and from side to side a brass bar is placed so that a number of large cards painted to represent dominoes can be supported in an upright manner. The hand is so pivotted on the trolley



ENDS 'A' REMOVED MESSAGE FLAP  
DROPS TO BOTTOM SLATE

that it can dip down and pick up a card, or it can strike the bell.

Four members of the audience are invited to come on to the stage and examine the case completely, and afterwards to deal out the cards and play a game, the hand acting as one of the partners. The domino cards belonging to the hand are placed in the case by means of two glass doors in the front, which are then closed. The other players' cards are placed on a small table like an easel so that the audience can see them. The game is played, when the hand travels back and forward and picks up the required card. When it cannot go on with the game it strikes the bell.

The hand is operated from below by an assistant, who can see through a small cut in the stage, which is opened after the players have examined the case. The signal to stop at any particular card is given by another assistant situated in the limelight box who can see what cards to play on the table. The assistant working below moves his trolley back and forward, and picks up the cards on a signal to stop from above.

The hand is worked in the following manner. Across the top of the case runs a double piece of brass capable of concealing a strong black thread. There are two of these channels, one for hiding the thread which moves the trolley back and forward, and the other one for making the hand dip and pick up a card or strike a bell.

The front, or dipping thread, is stretched between two plungers operating in two of the side rods, and when they are both pulled down by the assistant under the stage, it carries the thread down and pressing on the front part of the hand, it causes it to dip and pick up a card by means of a clip between the fingers. Cards are picked up and removed each time by the performer.

The back thread for the travelling is operated by two plungers also, but in this case the thread is not stretched permanently between them, but continued down through the plungers at each side, small counterweights working in pulleys. It will thus be seen that the thread can first be lowered down

on to the hand, where it is gripped by another wire clip, and then it can be pulled by the counterweights from side to side.

The working can now be seen. After the players have examined the case the threads cannot be seen, as they are hidden in the channels at the top; then the cards are placed in. The assistant then pulls down his back plunger and starts to work the trolley to and fro, when he gets the signal to stop from the assistant above (who can see the game). He stops at that card, and, pulling down his front plungers, causes the hand to dip and pick up a card or strike the bell as required.

#### THE RETURN OF DIOGENES

The platform is provided with a board fitted with rollers; on this the conjurer puts a tub without a bottom or cover, so that all the spectators are able to see through it. The conjurer then takes two sheets of paper, with which he covers the tub at each end. This done, the performer passes through the bung-hole of the tub an electric light; this can be seen glimmering through the sheet of paper closing the ends of the tub, showing most effectually that there is no one inside. The sheet of paper in front is now pierced, and out of the tub walks a man dressed like Diogenes.

The tub used for this trick is a barrel large enough to hold a person about five feet four inches. In order afterwards to be able to close up the tub, the conjurer has two hoops which fit on the ends holding the paper tight.

At the bottom of the platform there is a trap-door, through which we shall see Diogenes at the desired moment slip into the trap.

As a rule, the tub stands upright in front of the stage. It stands here, however, always on the right side of the stage. On the left side of the background (it must be noted that all these statements are made as proceeding from the background) stands an easel.

The attendants carry the tub on to the middle of the stage, two handles are fixed to the tub; by means of these the assistants now hold the tub in such a way that one can see through it.

After this has been done the attendants carry the tub back to where it was before, placing it so that the bung-hole is on top.

"Now, please look carefully. The more you watch the less you will see."

The performer then shows the sheets of paper with which he closes the tub, and the hollow stand in which he afterwards places the tub. This brief space of time, occupying about twenty seconds, is utilized by the assistant in fastening the hoop to the fake end of the tub, which contains the hinged band, in such a manner as to enable the performer later to tighten the sheet of paper over the moveable frame.

Having shown the platform, the performer places it so that the tub, as soon as it is arranged on the stand, rests over the trap-door.

"The principal thing about my trick," says the performer, "are these two sheets of paper. The mere fact that there is no printing on them shows that they are quite remarkable sheets. In these days of printers' ink and advertisements, it is quite a miracle to meet with a flat surface without printing or pictures. I'm thinking of making use of my head as an advertising station."

The sheets of paper having been examined, the performer hands them to the attendant, and the latter hooks them on to the easel. This done, the conjurer either draws a mystic sign on one of the sheets of paper, or he asks the audience to say which sheet shall be marked. Meantime, however, the conjurer receives the unprepared hoop from the attendant, puts this over the sheets, takes a paint-brush, and passes it along the inner side of the hoop. By this means each sheet is provided with a ring. Having made the drawings on the sheets of paper, the performer takes the first of these and places it over the opening of the tub closed up by the hoop over the fake hinged band on the end of the barrel. This leaves the projecting part of the sheet of paper behind the tub.

The attendant now takes the tub and places it on the stand, with the bung upwards. The end of the tub closed up by

the sheet of paper points downwards, the overhanging part of the sheet of paper reaching down to the ground and so hiding from view what is going on behind the tub.

Whilst this is going on, the conjurer is painting over the second sheet. As soon as he has done this he goes up to the tub and holds the sheet over the opening in front. The assistant takes the hoop and presses it over the sheet, tightening the hoop with the aid of a wooden hammer over the sheet.

This is technically the supreme moment in the performance of the trick, as, during the time occupied in fastening the front sheet to the tub at this moment, Diogenes slips into the tub without the spectators being in any way able to notice it. To achieve this completely it is necessary that the performer should stand immediately to the right, and his assistant to the left of the tub, when tightening the hoops over the two sheets. As the assistant fixes the hoop with the aid of a wooden hammer the performer holds the tub with both hands, his left hand being in front of the tub, and his right hand behind it, almost as if the conjurer wants to hold it tight so as to prevent it from slipping whilst being hammered. In reality, however, the right hand opens the shutter of the rear wall of the tub, so as to enable Diogenes to get inside. As soon as Diogenes is in the tub the trap-door is closed. Immediately the conjurer and his assistant tear off the overhanging parts of the sheets of paper so that the covering is destroyed, and the audience mystified during the remaining moments of the performance. On tearing off the overhanging paper, the performer and his assistant turn the tub with the stand round in such a way that the side previously in the rear is now in front, this enabling the spectators to see the first sheet, which is still quite intact. By this means all doubt is set at rest, as nobody imagines that in spite of this the other side can be opened.

As before mentioned, the conjurer now inserts an electric light, attached to a wire, in the tub. As this is in front of Diogenes, the performer can light it without apprehending any trouble arising out of the shadows thrown—that is to say, that the silhouette of Diogenes would be visible.

“You see everything transparent, the paper is quite untorn.

Now we will look at this side, too (turning the tub round once). Diogenes is sitting in the tub. (Turns the light out.) It's dark again; you know, darkness favours dark deeds."

In the meantime Diogenes has changed his position in the tub in such a way that he is now in front of the lamp. On this being lighted again the shadow of Diogenes is seen.

"I am confronted with this problem. How is it possible for Diogenes to get into the tub without your noticing it? I can't tell you to shut your eyes for five minutes, as I am not able to control every eye, more especially where there are so many beautiful eyes fixed on the tub. Besides, you don't want to go to sleep, but to be amused, and I suppose I shall have to try to solve the problem by means of magic."

The lamp is again lighted, and the shadow of Diogenes is seen. "You see it's done quicker than greased lightning."

The performer tears off the paper closing up the side in front, and Diogenes creeps out of the tub.

"Are you Diogenes? How did you do it?" Diogenes shakes his head, and walks off.

"He's a selfish man; he won't tell how he did it, and I—well, I dare not."

#### OWEN CLARK'S THOUGHT TRANSMISSION

Here is my idea of a code which for simplicity and audacity will be hard to beat. All the effects that can be obtained by counting and numerous other devices can be performed by my method and learned (by a conjurer) in ten minutes. It can be performed anywhere and at any moment.

Apparatus required:—Fake blindfold, blackboard, chalk and a pack of cards.

For blindfold get a yard of black *voile*, fold till it becomes opaque and cut through all thicknesses, leaving one thickness to cover the eyes, when everything will be plainly visible.

The blackboard may be simply resting on the table top or on the easel. The medium seated at the back, the board on his left.

First announce what you are going to do, i.e., the medium will read your thoughts, etc. There will not be a single word

spoken by you, or any signs, codes or signals by which you can convey any of the information to your assistant, and yet he will be able to read anything placed on the board, see playing cards as readily as yourself or themselves, etc.

"I will firstly give these cards to be thoroughly shuffled. Thank you. Now will you try and see through this thick piece of felt? Nothing to be seen, is there? Thank you. I will proceed to blindfold the medium. Now, please, will one of you place a sum on the board, say four figures each way, after which I will not say a single word. Thank you."

Take the chalk from the gentleman who has just assisted, and draw a line under the sum; at the same time, having previously added the units, give the medium the first figure by placing two fingers at the back of the board (top half), when you hold it to draw the line. Three fingers for a 3, four fingers for a 4, and closed fist for a 5. These figures are given by holding the top half of the board. If a 6 is to be coded, steady the board by holding on the lower part, and show one finger to him. This will give him 6 as each time the board is steadied by holding the bottom half, he adds five on to the fingers shown. So that a closed fist holding the top half of board is 5 and closed fist holding lower half is 10 or 0. The sum, is, of course, added up by the conjurer, and next figure coded as the figure called out by medium is written down. May I impress upon the medium to work very slowly; this makes the greatest impression. After some deliberation with hand over eyes (looking through fingers at board), he says: "The next figure that I see is a—6" (say); so much for the addition of the sum. How simple! and how careless you must be if you make a mistake. The next thing is to point at various figures at random and the medium immediately says what they are, adds two together, etc. etc.

The medium and conjurer commit to memory a series of figures, we will take the old:

Eight kings threatened to save ninety-five ladies for one

8      13      3      10      2      7      9      5      12      4      1  
sick knave.

The formula is gone through thus, omitting the picture cards, first time through.

8, 3, 0, 2, 7, 9, 5, 4, 1, 6.

Start again pointing to 8; next strike out say a 6 and a 7. The medium says those two figures come to 13. That's a 3, those two come to 10. That's a 2; that's a 7; that's a 9; that's a 5; those two figures come to 12. That's a 4; that's a 1; that's the *same*, 1; (pointing where there is no figure) there's nothing there. That's a 6; those two figures come to 11. (Applause.) Now (having added up the top line which comes to 10) quickly bracket it off, when the medium immediately says, "that line comes to 10"; same with next, medium says, "that line comes to 23", and so on with other lines.

These totals are communicated thus: The last figure of the first line is 0. When making the brackets give him the last figures by method before employed, i.e., by holding the board by the top half with closed fist, etc. The first figures are given simultaneously with the last, thus:

One is given by making a bracket as shown (one firm stroke); 2 by making two strokes (square bracket); 3 is given by running the chalk off the end of the board which sound is easily recognized by the medium.

This item should be performed quickly, both figures being given at the same time; the effect is startling. The chalk is handed to a member of the audience, who, by gesture, is desired to put a figure on the board. Immediately he does so the medium says what it is. This can be repeated as often as desired. The performer stands with his left side to medium with left hand on hip, and simply works the same method as on the board by showing his fingers, high on the hip represents fingers as shown, and lower on the hip, add five.

Now, for the cards: When you first came forward and announced what you were going to do, the blindfold was lying on the table, folded up and also covering up six cards, previously committed to memory by both parties. "Eight kings three-ten to seven" will do; order clubs, diamonds, hearts, spades. The pack was given to be shuffled; when

handed back it was dropped on pre-arranged cards, and blind-fold picked up. Now pick up the pack (standing behind table with back to medium) and throw off on to the table the first six cards, face upwards. Draw one towards you and look at it intently. The medium, after a few seconds' lapse, says: "The card I see is a black card—it is clubs; it is the—8—of clubs. The performer shows the card to the audience and throws it aside. Draws the next card towards him and repeats process.

A few tips: If in pointing out the figures there does not happen to be the required figure on the board simply write it down. To make the whole show impressive, do the adding up and the cards very slowly.

If there is not sufficient light on the back of the board to show the fingers, put a lamp or a candle on a table and explain that this will prove that the board is not transparent.

The explanation is necessarily rather lengthy, but it will be found that the process employed is simplicity itself and learned in ten minutes.

#### PROFESSOR HOFFMANN'S FOUR ACES TRICK—MODERN VERSIONS

It cannot be said that there are five-and-thirty ways of working the four aces trick, but there are certainly half a dozen, and each of them has some element to recommend it. A practical knowledge of two or three of its various forms will be found a valuable asset by any conjurer, and especially so by the amateur performing frequently before the same set of spectators, as it enables him to vary his methods, and on occasion to accept an "encore" without fear of giving away his secret by a repetition of the same working.

Briefly stated, this trick, as the reader is doubtless aware, consists of laying the four aces singly face downwards on the table, with three indifferent cards on each; and after giving the spectators full choice of any one of the four packets, bringing all the aces together in the chosen one, the three indifferent cards which formed part of it returning to the pack.

One fairly easy method of working this trick is as

follows: The wizard, picking out the four aces, hands them temporarily to a spectator, while a second spectator is invited to satisfy himself, by inspection of the pack, that there are no duplicates in it. When it is returned to the performer he makes the pass in such a manner as to bring the two halves of the pack face to face, and has the four aces laid face downwards on the surface which happens to be uppermost, professedly the back of the pack. He remarks: "I will now place these four aces separately on the table." He accordingly lays down the first ace, but in the act of doing so with the right hand, turns over the pack in the left, so that the three cards which he next lays down (the four forming a row) are indifferent cards from the opposite side of the pack. He then, duly covering his manipulations by appropriate patter, again turns over the pack, remarking: "I shall now place on each of these four aces three other cards, just as they come to hand," and he deals three cards (all three at a time) on each accordingly. The first three, which are the aces, are laid on the ace already placed, so that this packet in reality consists of the four aces, and the other three of four indifferent cards. He next invites the audience to indicate two of the four heaps, and then one of the two remaining; forcing their choice by the usual equivoque, so that the packet left on the table is the one consisting of the four aces, which, after a little more patter, are in due course exhibited.

One variation of the trick is directed to enable the performer to show, *after* four aces have been laid out on the table, that each of them is really an ace. To effect this, a little pre-arrangement of the pack is made. The threes of hearts, diamonds and clubs are privately removed and palmed. The performer, picking out the aces, hands them to four different persons, the ace of spades first, and then hands the pack to a fifth person, who is invited to satisfy himself that there are no more aces in it.

When the pack is returned, the performer invites the holders of the aces to replace them, face downwards, upon it, taking them back, however, in the reverse order to that in which he distributed them, so that the ace of spades shall

be uppermost. On to these he palms the abstracted threes. Then, with the remark: "I will place these four aces on the table," he lays out the four top cards. The faces of the first three he takes care not to expose, but in the case of the fourth (the ace of spades) he "accidentally" allows its face to be seen. He then proceeds, laying the pack for the moment aside: "First, let me show you once more that these cards are really the aces." This he proceeds to do as follows: Beginning with the ace of spades, he holds down the hinder end with the fingers of the left hand, and with the right bends up the card so as to show two-thirds of its surface. He proceeds in a like manner with the three other cards, taking care in each case that the fingers of the right hand shall so far cover the face of the cards as to hide the extra pip, which would otherwise give away the trick. This done, he deals the next three cards (the aces) on to the ace of spades, and a like number of indifferent cards on the three others, after which the trick is terminated in the usual way.

The three discarded packets are mixed together before turning them up, so as to avoid calling attention to the fact that each of the bottom cards is a "three".

With regard to the last-mentioned working, I had seen the trick advertised in this form for some time before I had any knowledge as to "how it was done". It seemed to me that the showing of the aces as they lay on the table was a valuable addition, and I set to work to discover how it could be managed. At it happened, however, the method I devised proceeded on totally different lines from the advertised version, as I subsequently became acquainted with it. Whether it was better or worse I will leave the reader to decide.

According to my method the performer provides himself with three extra aces, say heart, spade and diamond, each a shade longer than the rest of the pack. These he palms, and after the four aces have, as in the working last described, been replaced on the top of the pack (*club* last) he lays over them the three "long" aces. These he places one by one on the table, *showing each as he does so*, and lastly, the club ace. On this last the three normal aces (which next follow on

the pack) are placed, and on each of the long aces three indifferent cards. The choice of the "four ace" heap is then forced, as usual. Before showing it, however, he picks up the other three heaps, one by one, and replaces them on the pack, in doing so casually showing the ace at the bottom of each. Making time by means of his patter, he extracts these one by one and gets them to the top, after which he ruffles the pack in the direction of the four cards on the table. As a proof of "no deception" he does not himself turn up the aces, but invites a spectator to do so, and while the general attention is thus occupied, he palms off and pockets the three long cards, a moment later handing the pack for further examination.

At a somewhat later date, I received from Mr. C. E. Medrington the description of a method of his own, which proceeds on nearly identical lines, but dispenses with the use of long cards. He entitles his version the "Excelsior" Four Ace Trick, and works it as follows:

He too uses three duplicate aces, say, as before, heart, spade and diamond. Three indifferent cards, taken from the pack, are placed in the performer's right trouser pocket. He openly picks out from the pack the four aces belonging to it, but in taking the pack in hand to do so, palms on to the back of it three extra aces. Showing the four aces fanwise, he places them on the top, the non-duplicated ace (in this case a club) being the undermost of the four, and therefore, now mid-way between two groups of three.

Having got so far, he takes the four uppermost aces, one by one, and lays them in a row on the table, letting the face of each be seen as he does so. He takes, without showing them, the next three cards (the duplicate aces) and lays them on the ace of clubs; then laying three indifferent cards on each of the other aces.

The next step is to turn up each of the four packets showing that each has an ace at the bottom. The "choice" of, first two packets, and then one of the remaining two, is given in the usual way, so as to leave on the table the one with the ace of clubs at the bottom. As each of the three packets is rejected, it is exhibited fanwise before being replaced on the pack, and

in the act of replacing it the three top cards of the pack are brought by the pass to the bottom. The effect of this is that all three packets have been replaced, the three aces just shown are left on top, though the spectators imagine them to be distributed in the pack. The turning up of the four-ace packet, which next follows, makes ample opportunity for palming off the duplicates, and the performer brings the trick to a conclusion by affecting to hear a question or remark as to where the three indifferent cards, which, professedly formed part of the ace heap, have gone to. "Oh, those cards. They are here," says the performer, putting his hand in his pocket, and producing the three cards he had beforehand placed there, the duplicate aces being left behind in their stead.

The late Charles Bertram worked the trick with a little addition of his own. Handing the pack to a spectator, he invited him to pick out the four aces. While he was doing so Bertram used to explain: "Stop a bit, sir! That won't do, you have taken one of my cards!" So saying, he plunged his hand into the gentleman's breast-pocket, and produced a card. This was apparently a mere bit of by-play intended to create a laugh, which it naturally did, but as a matter of fact, the card produced was one of four, previously palmed, the other three being left behind in the pocket.

The four aces having been picked out, Bertram placed them on the top of the pack, and then dealt them in a row, face downwards. He asked his victim whether he was quite certain that those were the four aces. Unless the gentleman was usually trustful, he expressed a doubt upon the subject, and after a little chaff as to his incredulity (during which the performer palmed off the three uppermost cards) he was invited to pick them up, look at them, and put them one by one back upon the pack. "Now, sir, are you satisfied so far?" asks the performer. "Then I will deal them again, or better still, you shall deal them yourself." He hands him the pack, on which he has in the meantime replaced the three palmed cards. The four now uppermost cards are accordingly laid out in a row as under:

Nos. 1, 2 and 3 being the palmed cards, and No. 4 the first of the aces. "Now, sir, please lay three more cards on this one" (indicating No. 4). "And now on this one" (No. 3). "Now on this" (No. 2). "And now on this last one. Now," he continues, "here we have four packets, dealt by yourself. Which of them would you like?" Here comes in the usual *equivoque*, the performer interpreting the reply in the sense that best suits his purpose, and returning the pair which do *not* include the aces, to the pack. The choice between the other two packets is worked in the same way, the one consisting of the four aces being left alone on the table. "Now, sir, you have there one ace and three other cards. Place your hand on them, and hold them down tightly, or I shall take them away from you; in fact, however tightly you may hold them, I shall take them away from you and send you the other three aces instead." He ruffles the pack over the out-spread hand. "Now, sir, look at the cards." The four cards are turned up and found to be the aces. "No deception, you see. Thank you for your assistance," says the performer. The victim turns to leave the platform. "But stop a bit, sir, you mustn't go off like that. You haven't given me back my other three cards." He plunges his hand into the pocket, and produces one by one the three cards left therein at the outset; this final bit of spoof bringing the trick to a brilliant conclusion.

I cannot better conclude than by describing a wholly new form of the trick; the invention of a gentleman so eminent in a more serious walk of life that he has only consented at my special entreaty to allow his name to be associated in print with an art of mere amusement. I refer to Mr. J. Holt Schooling, the eminent actuary and statistician, who finds it a relief now and then to stray from the arid region of hard fact into the fairyland of magic, and from whom I have from time to time received many valuable suggestions.

The speciality of Mr. Holt Schooling's method, which may deservedly be called the "Climax", is that the faces of the cards are exposed until the very last moment, so that there is no possibility of substitution. He himself is accustomed to prelude his own version by performing the trick after Bertram's



J. O'NEILL FISHER  
The honorary secretary of the Mag



fashion, just described, but with the piquet pack of 32 cards, only; which, by the way, is for magical purposes frequently to be preferred to the full pack. The pack thus used is then secretly changed for another consisting of the following:

- A. Four double cards, as under:
  - Ace of Spades, back and front alike.
  - Ace of Hearts, backed by seven of hearts.
  - Ace of Diamonds, backed by King of Diamonds.
  - Ace of Clubs, backed by King of Clubs.
- B. Three double cards as under:
  - King of Diamonds, Ace of Diamonds at back.
  - Seven of Hearts, Ace of Hearts at back.
  - King of Clubs, Ace of Clubs at back.
- C. Nine double cards, back and front alike. (The precise nature of these cards is immaterial, so long as they do not duplicate either of the foregoing.)
- D. Sixteen ordinary cards, of such nature as to complete the pack.

In preparing for the trick, packet C is laid face up on packet D; packet B on packet C (with the non-ace faces of packet B uppermost), and lastly, packet A, with the ace-faces uppermost and the ace of spades at the top, on packet B.

On a second table, in the rear, are a couple of large envelopes (the size used by Mr. Schooling is  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by  $15\frac{1}{2}$  inches), with the opening at one of the longer sides.

Having exhibited the trick after Bertram's fashion the performer offers to repeat it in a more surprising form, viz., with the cards, faces up, and in sealed envelopes. So saying, he gathers up the twenty-eight non-ace cards he has just used, holding them faces up in his left hand. He then adds the four aces, also faces up, with the ace of spades last, holding the pack so that this card shall be in full view. With the pack thus held in his left hand, he turns to bring forward the two envelopes, and under cover of the turn for that purpose makes the needful "change" of packs, the faked pack replacing

the other in the hand, with the ace of spades visible as before.

While the envelopes are being inspected, the operator lays the prepared pack face up on the table on which he is performing and spreads the cards in a row, overlapping one another, so that all may be visible. Thus displayed, the pack appears quite ordinary—no two cards being alike.

The performer begins by drawing out with the tip of his finger the four aces, placing them in a row, face upwards. Then, after the same manner, he draws the three cards of the B packet on to the aces of spades, and those of packet C in threes, on to the other three aces. The remaining sixteen (ordinary) cards are put aside, as no longer needed. "Choice" of packets is then offered, that of the four-aces packet being forced in the usual way.

Into one of the two envelopes the performer slides the three rejected packets of cards, previously gathered into a loose heap, seals or fastens down the flap, and turns the envelope *flap side down* upon the table.

He next picks up the ace heap, and showing it fanwise, calls attention to the four aces of which it consists; being (as exhibited to the spectator) ace of spades, king of diamonds, seven of hearts, and king of clubs. Someone is asked to write down the names of these three, so that there may be no mistake. This done, these are placed face up, in the second envelope, which is likewise closed, and turned flap down.

The trick is now done. After a little appropriate patter, the performer picks up the envelope containing the three rejected packets, tears off one end, and slides out the cards, of which the sides hitherto unseen are now uppermost. He calls attention to the fact that the three cards whose names were written down have found their way into this envelope, and that on the other hand, the three aces which previously formed part of its contents are no longer there. Then, tearing off the end of the second envelope, he slides out the four cards it contained, when the three missing aces are found to have joined the ace of spades.

This trick involves the taking of some pains in the needful preparation of the pack, but it is well worth it. The

performer will find himself amply repaid by the extraordinary effect produced by it, and by the fact that, the pack once prepared, the actual working of the trick is simplicity itself. With ordinary care, there is no possibility of anything going wrong; and in good hands, the trick should, in popular phrase, "bring down the house".

The more deliberately the trick is done, and the less cards are handled, the better. The use of the finger-tip to draw out the cards, by excluding all idea of sleight of hand, is important to its full effect.

#### BAUTIER DE KOLTA'S THREE COINS TRICK

This is a little experiment in genuine sleight of hand invented by the great Bautier de Kolta for the bewilderment of his friends. It is a capital trick for the drawing-room, and as no apparatus is required, I imagine that it will appeal to clever performers who like a trick requiring a good deal of real conjuring ability—not mere juggling—to make it successful.

The effect is quite simple. The conjurer has three coins, a penny, a florin, and a five-shilling piece, and three handkerchiefs. Each coin is wrapped in a handkerchief, but all three coins come together in one handkerchief.

To begin the trick, the performer has an extra florin and an extra penny exactly like those used in the experiment, palmed in his right hand. He openly picks up the five-shilling piece and wraps it in the first handkerchief, and in so doing, secretly introduces the palmed florin and penny. The handkerchief is then laid on the table.

In making that last movement, the conjurer palms another penny, similar to the others, in his left hand. He can get this penny from any place convenient to himself. He picks up the florin and the original penny in his right hand, with the penny next to his palm, and apparently puts them in his right hand, but really palms the penny. He lets the audience see the florin and the penny that he had palmed in his left hand. He openly places the penny on the table, puts the florin

in the right hand, and in wrapping it up in the second handkerchief, introduces the penny that he had palmed there.

He then takes the penny and wraps it up in the third handkerchief. By means of the usual trick fold or in any other way convenient to himself the conjurer vanishes the penny, flicks away the handkerchief, and shows that the penny has gone. Going to the second handkerchief he shows that the penny has joined the florin there. Repeating the last move, he wraps the two coins together and causes them to vanish and then anyone may open the first handkerchief and find the five-shilling piece, the florin, and the penny together.

In Bautier de Kolta's time, the vanishing of a coin from a handkerchief by means of the indiarubber ring was not invented, but I may point out that this method will assist anyone in performing the trick neatly. De Kolta was the last man in the world to despise any contrivance that would assist him in producing the effect he required.

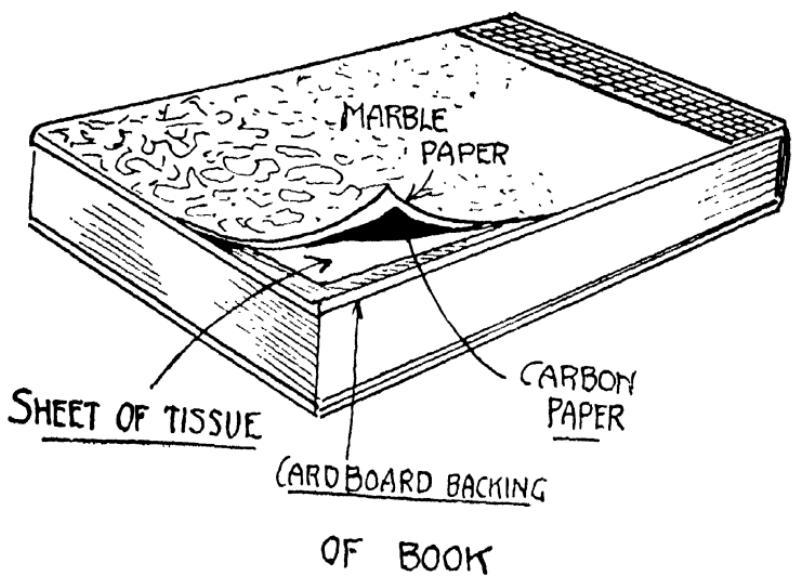
#### A GOOD THOUGHT-READING TRICK

This is an excellent method of obtaining a message which has been written down by a member of the audience. An innocent-looking note-book is handed to a spectator with the request that he will write down any question he pleases. The performer tears out a page from the book and places the paper on the cover. The book may be examined without fear of detection. It is natural that the sheet of paper is placed on the book.

Having written the message, the member of the audience is requested to fold it and place the note in his pocket. The book is passed on to the performer's assistant who is able to read the message, because the covers of the book have been specially prepared. By referring to the diagrams it will be seen that under the marble paper of the covers is a sheet of carbon paper; and under that is a piece of stout cardboard. Any message written on a paper placed on either cover of the book is, therefore, manifold, and the assistant merely has to slice away the marble paper and take out the tissue paper and



WRITING MESSAGE ON TOP OF  
REPORTING



read the message. By a pre-arranged code the assistant is able to convey to the performer the message.

This method was invented by Mr. Harry Price, who kindly passed it on to me for publication.

#### THE TRAVELLING HANDKERCHIEF

Good handkerchief tricks are few and far between, and therefore I think that the following will be welcome by conjurers.

The effect is as follows. The conjurer produces two handkerchiefs, a red and white, and wraps each in a piece of paper and gives them to two members of the audience. When these two assistants open the papers they find that the two handkerchiefs have changed places.

At the commencement of the trick the audience see only the handkerchiefs and the two papers to be used in the trick, but the performer also has another piece of paper screwed up into the shape that one of the other pieces of paper will assume when it has a handkerchief wrapped in it.

The conjurer wraps up the white handkerchief openly, and then tosses it from one hand to another for a few moments. Finally he accidentally drops it, and in picking it up gets the dummy parcel from his pochette. In giving the parcel to the assistant, the conjurer makes the change, palming the one containing the white handkerchief and really giving the dummy parcel. He then wraps up the red handkerchief and makes the change again, and gives that assistant the parcel containing the white handkerchief. The parcel containing the red handkerchief is palmed in his hand, but on going to his table to get his wand he drops it behind some object on the table.

The wand has a white handkerchief twisted round one end of it, and this end the conjurer conceals in his hand. Showing both hands to be empty, and at the same time concealing the handkerchief end of the wand in his hands, the conjurer goes to the first man, and tapping the parcel, which is supposed to contain the white handkerchief, says that he

will extract the handkerchief by means of the magic wand. By this time he has got the handkerchief off the wand and has palmed it in his right hand. He produces the handkerchief and asks the assistant to undo his parcel. He does so and shows that it contains nothing, and so the audience are led to think that the conjurer really did take out the handkerchief by means of the wand.

While the audience are watching the assistant undoing the parcel, the conjurer puts his wand on the table and so gets possession of the parcel containing the red handkerchief. He palms this and then offers to do the trick again with the assistant who had the white handkerchief. He wraps up the white handkerchief and substitutes the parcel containing the red handkerchief. Then he announces that he will do the trick another way, and offers to make the two handkerchiefs change places. The audience believe that the other assistant holds a parcel containing a red handkerchief, but it is really a white handkerchief, and therefore all the conjurer has to do is to wave his wand from one assistant, and tell him that in that way he has caused the two handkerchiefs to change places. The assistants undo the parcels and discover that the conjurer's command has been obeyed. While the parcels are being undone, the conjurer can easily drop the extra parcel into his profonde.

#### CARD PRODUCTION EXTRAORDINARY

The performer distributes among the company a set of cardboard tickets, numbered from 1 to 32. One of the spectators is asked to take a piquet pack of cards, and after well shuffling them, to allow each of the persons holding a number to draw and retain one, the whole of the pack being thus distributed. The performer, calling "one", "two", "three", and so on, asks the person holding the corresponding card to name it for the information of the company. As the name of each is called, he himself, to avoid mistakes, repeats it. The drawn cards are then collected by the volunteer assistant, who shuffles them and hands them back to the

performer. The latter runs them over with their faces towards the spectators (as a further proof, if such were needed, that they are thoroughly mixed), after which he covers them with a handkerchief, and, passing his hand beneath, produces, first, the card drawn by the holder of ticket No. 1; then that drawn by No. 2, and so on, till all have been produced.

The trick is worked by the aid of an assistant behind the scenes. Having before him a duplicate pack, laid out in suits, so that any given card can be seen at a glance, he arranges them, as the name of each is called, in the positions indicated by the subjoined table, being that used in the well-known "alternate card" trick.

32	1	17	2	25	3	18	4
29	5	19	6	26	7	20	8
31	9	21	10	27	11	22	12
30	13	23	14	28	15	24	16

The cards answering to the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 are first placed, with a space between each pair; the next four immediately below these, and so on till four rows have been formed, after which the remaining cards are placed in the positions indicated by the other numbers. When the arrangement is complete, the operator picks up the cards from right to left, sliding the last card of the bottom row under the one next to it, and continuing in like manner with the other three rows, so that, when the pack is fully gathered up No. 32 is at the top, and No. 16 at the bottom. Under pretext of bringing on the handkerchief to cover the cards, the assistant places the pack thus arranged, masked by the handkerchief, on the performer's table. The latter, in picking up the handkerchief, secretly exchanges the pack he has so far used for this one, and after showing the faces of the cards, covers the pack with the handkerchief, inserts one hand beneath, and passing the top card to the bottom, produces the next, which will be the one answering to ticket No. 1. He proceeds after the same fashion till all have been produced.

The root idea is excellent, and the inventor deserves much credit for his ingenious conception. But in point of presen-

tation the trick leaves much to be desired. In the first place, the production of the same effect in the same way thirty-two times is a sin against one of the very first principles of good conjuring. After the spectators have seen, at most, a dozen cards produced as described, the element of surprise is exhausted, and any further production tends to lessen, rather than enhance, the effect of the trick. Again, the elaborate arrangement of the cards is so much labour wasted, and the use of the handkerchief as a pretext to cover the bringing on of the cards is a very weak expedient. An acute spectator would naturally ask himself why, if a handkerchief were needed, it should not be a borrowed one, or one taken from the performer's own pocket. It is true that this reflection would not bring him much nearer to the solution of the mystery, but everything a conjurer does should be (or, at any rate, appear to be) like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion, and every act for which there is no colourable motive detracts from the finish of the trick.

To get the maximum effect out of Herr Schrader's smart idea, I would in the first place discard the piquet pack, and use instead the ordinary whist pack, less one card. This card (for preference a black one, as being the more easily distinguishable at a distance), I would have the performer place in a pochette, or otherwise secrete in such manner that he can instantly palm it, face inwards, when needed. We will suppose that the five of clubs is so dealt with. I should limit the number of "tickets" to twelve, and consequently have at the outset only twelve cards drawn. This done, however, I would say to the volunteer assistant, "There's luck in odd numbers, they say. Take another card for yourself and make it thirteen." (The reason for this will presently appear.)

As each of the cards drawn (including the thirteenth) is named, the assistant behind the scenes need simply lay the corresponding cards, face upwards, one upon another, adding, on the face side, the rest of the pack, with the five of clubs as the foremost card. I would suggest that the pack thus arranged be brought on in a glass fitted with a two-faced mirror partition.

Such a glass, as the reader is doubtless aware, appears, at a few feet distance, empty though its hinder compartment may be fully "loaded" with anything needful for the trick in hand. In the present case, the glass would be brought on with the arranged pack, facing outwards, in the rear compartment, and so placed on the table. To the eye of the spectator, it would be merely an empty glass.

The performer, on receiving back the shuffled pack, would palm the secreted five of clubs on to its face, and after spreading the cards as described to show that they are well mixed, place them face outwards in the front compartment of the glass, and in replacing this upon the table give it a half turn; thereby bringing the arranged pack to the front. The spectators still see the five of clubs in front, and if the half turn is deftly made they cannot even suspect the alteration.

The production of the drawn cards in due order is now a ridiculously easy matter. As each is called for, the performer has merely to draw up the card for the time being hindermost. After, say, half a dozen have been produced in this way, he may, for the sake of variety, adopt one part of Herr Schrader's own working, covering the cards with a handkerchief, and producing the next two or three by groping under it, without seeing them.

On the principle of proceeding, as every conjurer should, *de plus fort en plus fort*, the performer, after producing the eleventh card, may say, "Now, if you like, I'll show you how it's done. It's merely a question of will power. I don't really pick out the cards. I just 'will' the card to rise, and it comes of its own accord into my hand. Watch carefully and you shall see one do it."

So saying, and standing behind his table, he straightens the fingers of the right hand and lowers the hand till it is within an inch or so of the top of the glass, the thumb passing stiffly down behind the card next to be produced. Under these conditions, a very slight flexure of the thumb, at the first joint only, will by the pressure of the tip cause the card to rise till it meets the fingers. The proceeding is audacious, but safe, for at first sight the illusion is perfect. It will, however,

scarcely bear repetition, and the performer may proceed to produce the last card in a still more striking manner.

In preparation for this, he should have a fine silk thread, about two feet long, attached to the lowest button of his waist-coat. The free hand, bearing a pellet of adhesive wax, may be pressed, till needed, against the top button. As soon as the twelfth card has been produced, he shifts the pellet to the tip of the right thumb, and remarking, "That completes our number, I think," with the same hand lifts the pack out of the glass, pressing the wax against the upper part of the hindermost card. He is, of course, reminded that there was a thirteenth card drawn. Apologizing for his forgetfulness, he replaces the pack in the glass, but the opposite way up. "I am rather afraid," he says, "that by taking the pack out of the glass I may have broken the spell, but we shall see. It will need a tremendous effort of the will; sixty mouse power or more, but I'll do my best. What was the card? Knave of spades, you say. I will talk to him in French; the cards always like that. *Valet de pique, à moi!* Yes, here he comes."

Holding his hands aloft, he moves a trifle farther from the table; thereby causing a gentle pull upon the silk thread, which passing over the edge of the glass causes the card slowly to rise.

The working I have above suggested is, of course, open to any amount of modification, according to the taste and capacity of the performer. If he is gifted with the dramatic instinct, this trick will give him ample opportunity for displaying it. For example, it will be found to have a good effect, now and then in the course of the trick (without remark, and as if avoiding rather than inviting observation) to rub the extended fingers of the right hand lightly along the left coat sleeve. This little bit of "spoof" will in all probability send home a certain section of the audience with the comfortable conviction that they know all about it. "Of course; it's done by electricity!"

## WINE AND WATER

The effect of the trick is as follows: The performer has a glass and a glass jug with water in it. He pours some of the water into the glass and it immediately changes to stout. This he pours back into the jug and the water is turned into a ruby red colour, the colour of a good port. He then pours the liquid backwards and forwards from the glass into the jug, and from the jug into the glass. It seems impossible that any further change can take place, but when the conjurer announces that he has changed his mind after all and will have a glass of water, he merely pours out the liquid into the glass and it changes into water. Then he pours the glass of water into the jug and the contents of the jug turn into water.

The shape of the jug has been considerably improved since the trick in this form was first invented. The bottom of the jug is faked with a secret chamber into which a small quantity of liquid can be placed. The liquid is highly concentrated oxalic acid.

The jug is about half-full of water, in which half a teaspoonful of salicylate of soda has been dissolved. The exact amount can be determined only by experiment; in some parts of the country the water contains a good deal of chalk, in others, the water is strongly impregnated with iron. To save all trouble of experimenting the performer can use distilled water.

The glass is painted with very strong "steel drops" and allowed to dry; it can then be placed upside down on the table, thus showing that there is nothing inside it.

The liquid oxalic acid is placed in the secret cavity at the bottom of the jug by means of a fountain pen filler. The back of the cavity is closed with a piece of wax and the front with a small nail.

To begin with the conjurer merely pours the water into the glass and it immediately changes to a dense black. He pours this into the jug and the water in the jug becomes red. He then pours the red liquid backwards and forwards from the glass to the jug, and to produce the final startling change

pulls out the nail from the secret cavity. He then holds the jug for a second over the glass, and allows the oxalic acid to escape into the glass. The next time the red liquid is poured into the glass it becomes transparent and when it is poured into the jug the liquid there is also changed into "water". The conjurer may drink the water from the jug before any change has occurred (although we see no necessity for this), but he must not touch it afterwards because the chemicals used are highly poisonous. We do not think that a conjurer ought to drink water from a jug, even in a trick, and as he must not touch a drop when it has been in the glass, the safest and best plan is merely to pretend to drink some of the "wine" from the glass.

#### THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM

In presenting a series of anti-spiritualistic effects the performer first calls attention to the cabinet in which the "manifestations" are to take place. The cabinet is about six feet high, four feet square, and the floor is raised some two feet from the stage.

The upper half of the back and two sides of the cabinet are made of wood; the lower half is screened in by thin art muslin curtains on brass rods. The performer draws the curtains on one side, pulls them back into position, and calls attention to three electric lamps, one at the back of the cabinet and one on either side. These lamps are placed in protruding brackets, and when the lights are switched on, the audience can see clearly through the back of the cabinet and through the muslin curtains at the sides. Thus, anyone approaching the cabinet either from the back or the sides would be instantly seen.

The performer then shows a small silver-plated stand or table, with two handcuffs attached. The performer shows that when the medium stands behind the table and places her hands into the handcuffs she can be held securely by means of padlocks.

The little stand also has a curtain attached to it. When

the curtain is drawn the top of the stand is hidden; the little curtain is two feet deep. Hanging in the centre of a semi-circular rod attached to the top of the stand is a weighted pendulum on a chain.

The performer, having shown all details of the stand, introduces the medium, a lady, who takes up her position in the centre of the cabinet and allows her wrists to be padlocked to the two sides of the little stand.

Then the curiosity of the audience as to the use of the swinging pendulum over the stand is at length gratified. The performer explains that spiritualistic influence is exerted by means of this pendulum, and that if an article is placed on the stand and the pendulum is set in motion the article on the stand will be subjected to spiritualistic influence.

The performer goes on to explain that spiritualistic séances are usually conducted in darkness, and that when a cabinet is used the medium is always screened from view by means of a heavy curtain—thus. Here the performer draws a velvet curtain across the front of the cabinet. “But,” continues the magician, “that is the ordinary method of conducting a séance, and the séance which we hope to have this evening is not an ordinary one. We do not need to hide the medium with this heavy curtain, and so I will draw it back again.”

The performer suits the action to the words and goes on to explain that all the darkness required for the séance can be secured by means of the little curtain drawn across the top of the stand. He places a bell on the stand and draws the curtain. He then shows the audience that the medium is in full view during the séance, and he sets the pendulum in motion. The bell is instantly rung, and when the little curtain is drawn to one side the bell is seen to be on its side.

A number of “spiritualistic manifestations” can be produced in the same way—knots tied on a handkerchief, mysterious writing produced on a slate, etc. etc. Productions of real flowers or other small articles can also be made. There is no limit to the effects which can be obtained by the use of this cabinet.

ARTHUR SHEPPWOOD





To come at once to the explanation—I will explain the various details presently. This assistant is on a shelf at the back of the cabinet and is screened from view by two mirrors, the edges of which are masked by the medium's legs. The concealed assistant passes her hand through the medium's dress and so out to the curtained stand.

Now for details. When the performer explains that séances are usually conducted in the dark, and that when a cabinet is used it is always screened from view, he draws a heavy curtain across it. The curtain remains there for a few seconds only, but during that time some remarkable changes have been effected in the cabinet although, when the curtain is drawn on one side again, everything appears to be in order, and exactly as it was before. But this is what happens.

The concealed assistant—a lady, of course—rests on the shelf at the back of the top of the cabinet. This shelf is held in position by iron stays because it has to bear the weight of the lady who is going to work the manifestations, the weight of two large plate-glass mirrors, and the weight of any articles to be produced during the séance.

At a given signal from the performer (when he has drawn the front curtain) an assistant below the stage can easily allow the top half of the back of the cabinet with the shelf on which the medium's assistant is resting to drop down to the bottom of the cabinet; at the same time the muslin curtain—or gauze frame—which was at the back or lower half of the cabinet is taken up to the back of the top of the cabinet. There is a mirror under the shelf on which the medium's assistant rests. This mirror is necessary in the first case because, when the cabinet is first shown, people in the stalls can look up under the cabinet. The mirror reflects the back curtains and so hides the shelf.

The method of bringing the top half of the back of the cabinet to the bottom, and allowing the bottom half to ascend, is exactly similar to that of raising a window and lowering it. The two pillars at the back of the cabinet hold a double sash frame.

The cords or wire cables that work the necessary movement

pass down the hollow legs at the back of the cabinet and through the stage. To each cord or cable is attached an iron ring, and an iron bar is passed through the two rings to secure simultaneous working of both sides of the frame. By holding on to this bar beneath the stage and releasing it slowly when he hears the signal, the assistant can bring the shelf with the mirrors from the top of the back of the cabinet to the bottom in three seconds.

At the commencement of the illusion the shelf with the assistant upon it and the two mirrors, etc., is held in position under the stage by two iron bolts, but these are removed when the performer begins to show the illusion and the assistant under the stage takes all the weight and holds on to the bar. The signal to him to let the bar gradually rise—and so work the illusion—is managed by a piece of white string attached to the shelf on which the medium's assistant is sitting. The assistant below the stage keeps his eye on this string, and directly he sees it pulled up (it passes down the hollow leg of the cabinet) he releases the bar and so brings the shelf down into position and sends the lower half of the back of the cabinet upwards.

This movement is made, of course, while the front curtain is drawn and if, at that moment, the curtain were pulled on one side the audience would see that the back of the lower half of the cabinet was filled in with two mirrors. But these two mirrors are hinged to the frame and so the medium's assistant is able to push them open until the two edges of the mirrors rest against the medium's legs. The mirrors reflect the two curtains at the side, and, therefore, everything seems to be "fair, square and above board".

Having pushed the mirrors into place—the work of a moment—the medium's assistant pulls the back panel out of the medium's dress. This is a simple matter, the panel being held in place by glove fasteners. The assistant's hand goes through a slit in the lining of the medium's dress and through a division between the two front panels of the dress; the medium, of course, wears tights under the dress. Thus the hand of the medium's assistant goes right through the dress to

the table in front of the medium, and the little curtain to this table hides all the necessary movement of the assistant's hand.

The little stand or table is not quite so simple a structure as it appears to be. The back half of the top of the stand slides down the pillar or leg of the stand, so that the assistant can easily get at anything which has been placed on the stand or cause a magical production by placing something on it. The various articles needed for the manifestations are hung on hooks on the back of the two mirrors. By means of a trigger under the half of the table nearest to her the assistant can easily lower that half and push it back into position. All under cover of the little curtain attached to the table. The front of the cabinet is open to view while the manifestations are in progress.



## CHAPTER XVI

### MAGICAL FURNITURE

EVERY magician of experience knows that some of the best illusions are really only enlarged editions of small tricks and that some of the best tricks are miniature editions of illusions. The same rule holds good with regard to magical jokes, but few magicians have realized that fact. Yet everybody has had some fun, at one time or another, with those mysterious little boxes which, when opened by the unsuspecting "buyer" of the jokes, give him many surprises.

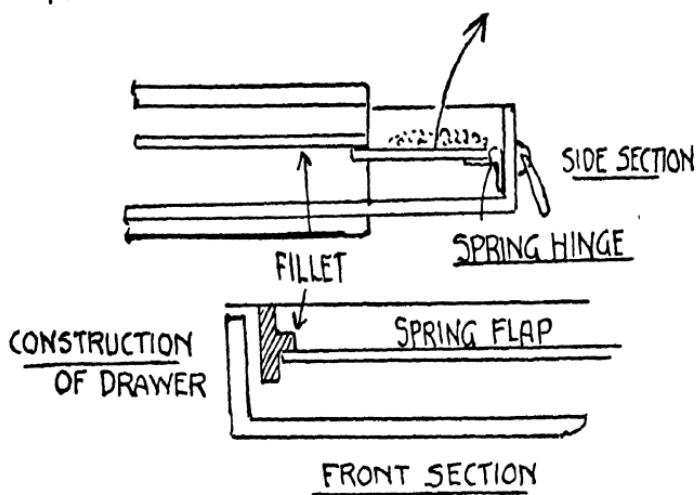
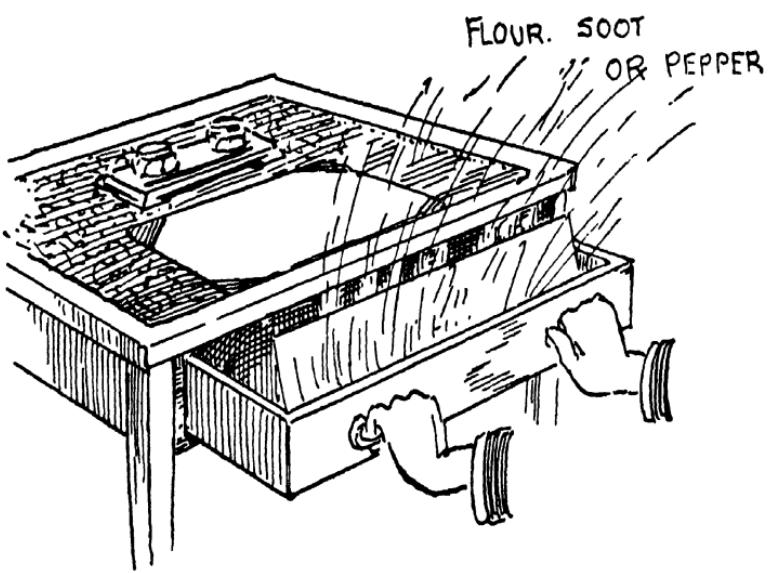
Is there any reason why that idea should not be applied to articles which are larger than a small portable box?

No! So here are a few examples of what can be done with a few pieces of furniture in order to turn them into magical jokes.

A thief-trap writing-table can be made to live up to its name; any burglar who opened the drawer in the table would probably hesitate before he went to any other drawer in the room. The drawer of the writing-table is fitted with a little spring flap inside it, and, for the benefit of any burglar who may be coming along is baited with pepper. On opening the drawer the burglar gets a shower of pepper in his face. His exclamations as the pepper got to work in his eyes would probably alarm any household.

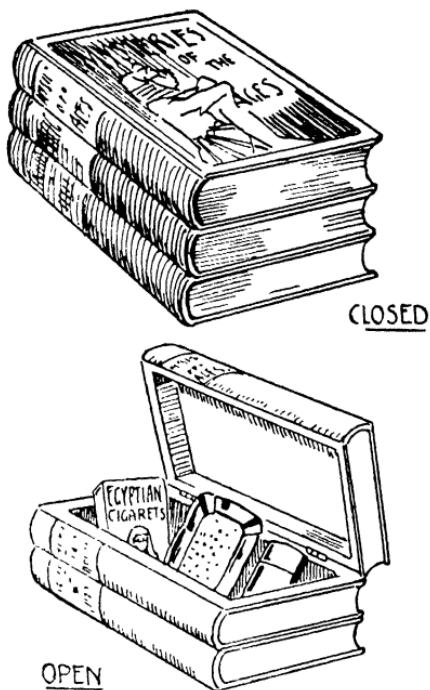
If one is using the writing-table as a little joke for one's friends a little soot or flour will do quite well in place of the pepper. The illustration shows the simple construction of the table. The cost of converting an ordinary drawer into a "thief-trap" drawer would be very small.

Books can hardly be considered as pieces of furniture. In some households I could name I fancy that the books are regarded mainly as ornaments; in others they are used—that



is to say, they are displayed on shelves—to give visitors the impression that the owners are "literary".

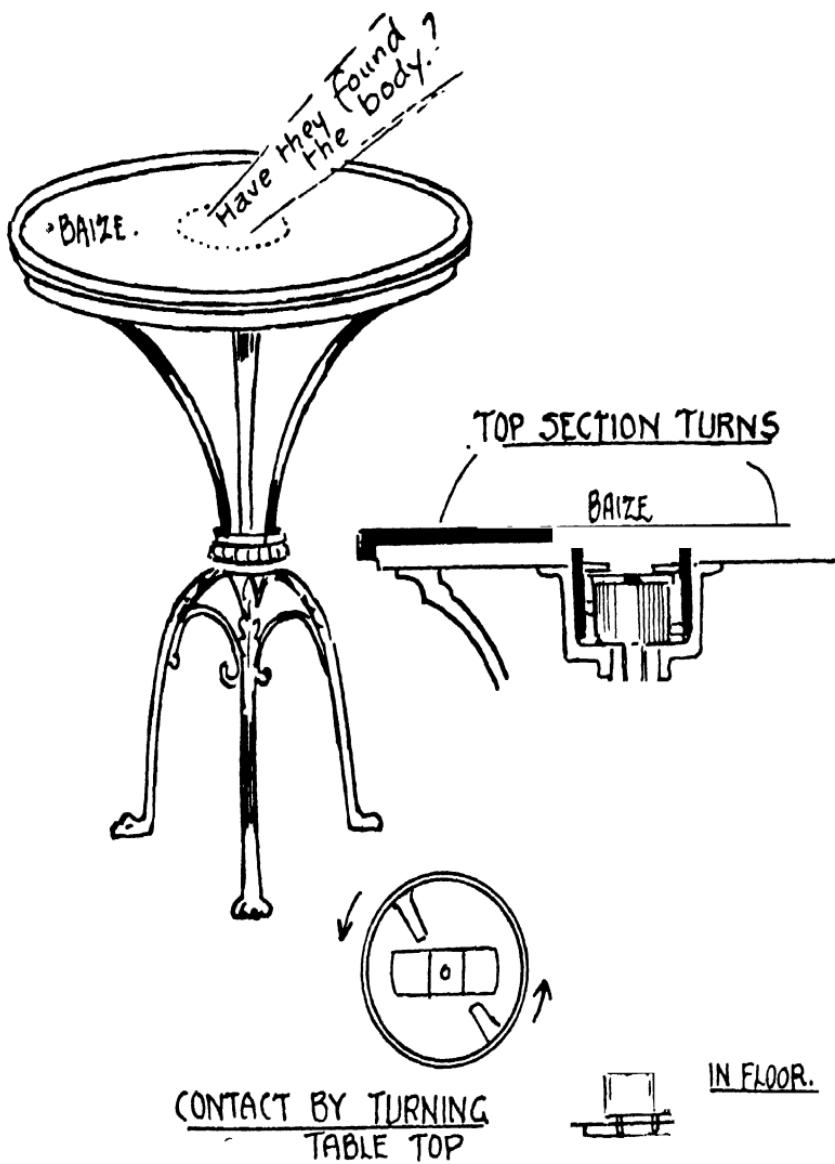
Three or four hefty volumes may well serve as a little joke to play on curious people. The books are placed in a prominent position in the room and when the visitors arrive the host and hostess can secretly amuse themselves by wondering when a visitor will say: "Hullo, what are you reading?" With this remark the top book will be picked up, bringing the next



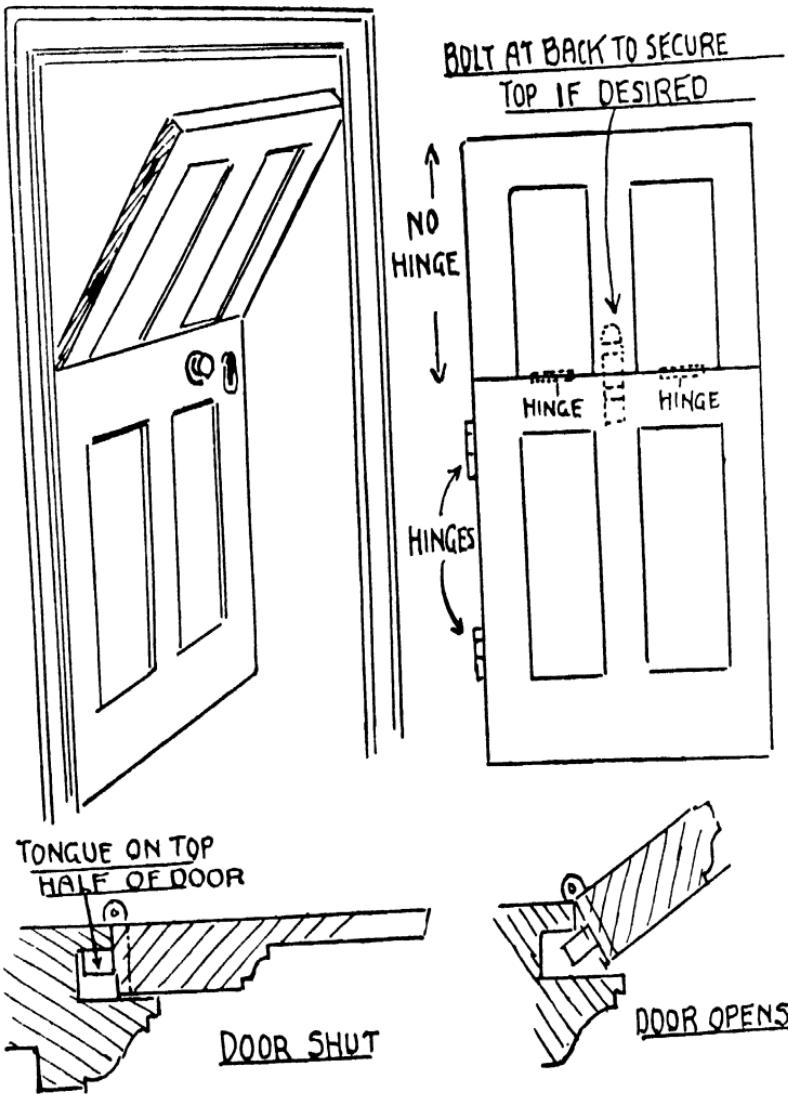
one with it! And then the person suffering from a mild attack of curiosity discovers that the top two books are really only a box in which the host keeps smoking materials—a box of cigarettes, ash-trays, matches, etc. The illustration shows how this little joke can be made.

Every schoolboy knows how to make a "booby trap" with a door and a big pillow. The door is opened a few inches and the pillow lodged on the top of it; when someone comes along and pushes the door open down comes the pillow on his head.

## THE TALKING TABLE



## TRICK DOOR



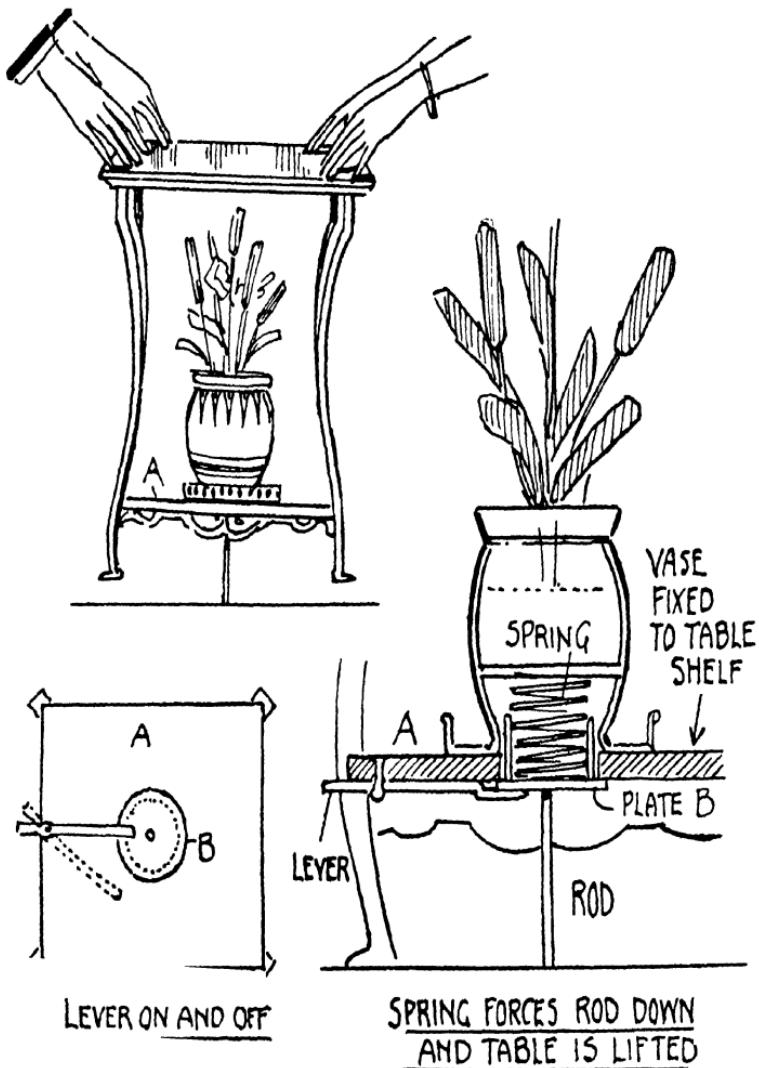
Using this idea we can make a door that collapses—that is to say, half of it falls inwards, when the door is opened, and gives the visitor a tap on the head. The diagrams show how a door can be constructed to produce this effect. The top half of the door is not hinged to the post, but it is attached by two hinges to the lower half of the door. Directly the door is opened the top half falls inwards by its own weight. When the householder does not wish to use the door as a big magical joke he can easily fix the top half to the lower by means of a small bolt in the centre, when the trick door becomes an ordinary, innocent door.

A talking table is a little more elaborate. The top of the table is made to turn, and when the visitors sit round it with their hands on the table the host takes care that the top does turn! The diagrams show what happens then. A gramophone is concealed in the centre of the table, or the voice can be produced by wireless.

A "spirit" table that rises in the air when people sit round it with their finger-tips resting on the top of the table is another good joke. Here again the illustrations explain the "works". On a ledge under the table-top is an innocent-looking flower-pot with a plant in it, but in the lower part of that flower-pot there is a compressed spring and immediately under it is a stout rod passing to the floor. The spring is held in position with a small lever which projects for an inch from one of the legs of the table. One of the sitters merely has to shift the lever and the spring comes into action, causing the table to rise.

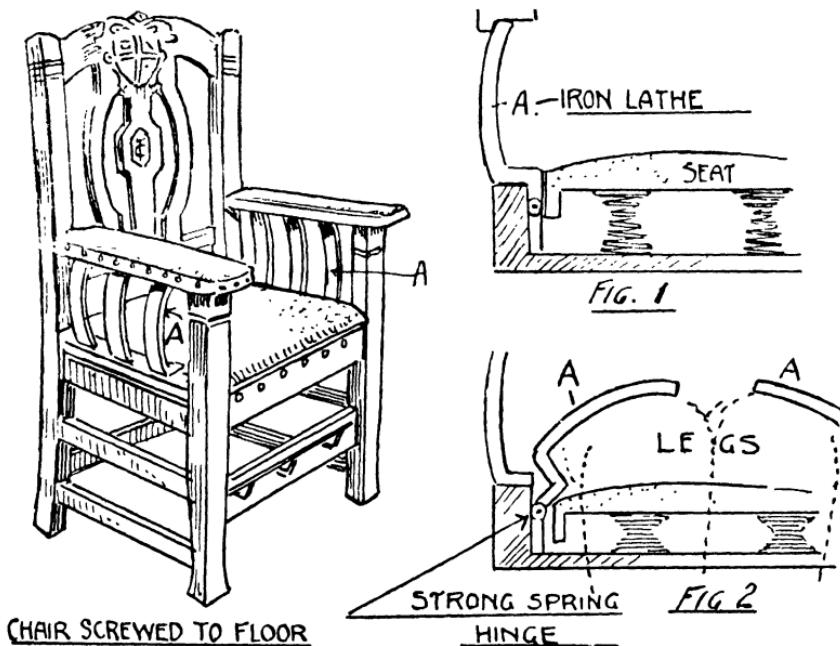
A highly ornamental Chinese chair will give the "surprise of his life" to any unsuspecting person who sits in it. In the centre of the back of the chair is a gruesome-looking head which comes down with a bang on the head of the sitter.

The mechanism is very simple; any chair could easily be converted into this huge magical joke, as the illustration shows. Under the seat of the chair there is a spring which, being depressed by the weight of the sitter, draws down a rod at the back of the chair. It will be seen that this rod has served to keep the "head" in position and that the "head" is hinged.



Therefore, directly the rod is drawn down the "head" must fall.

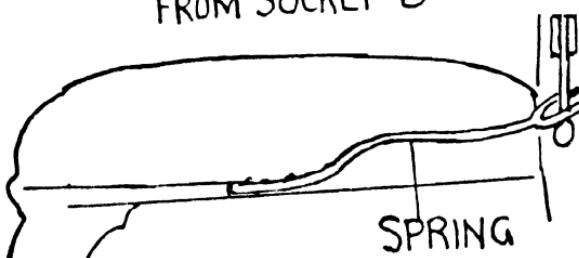
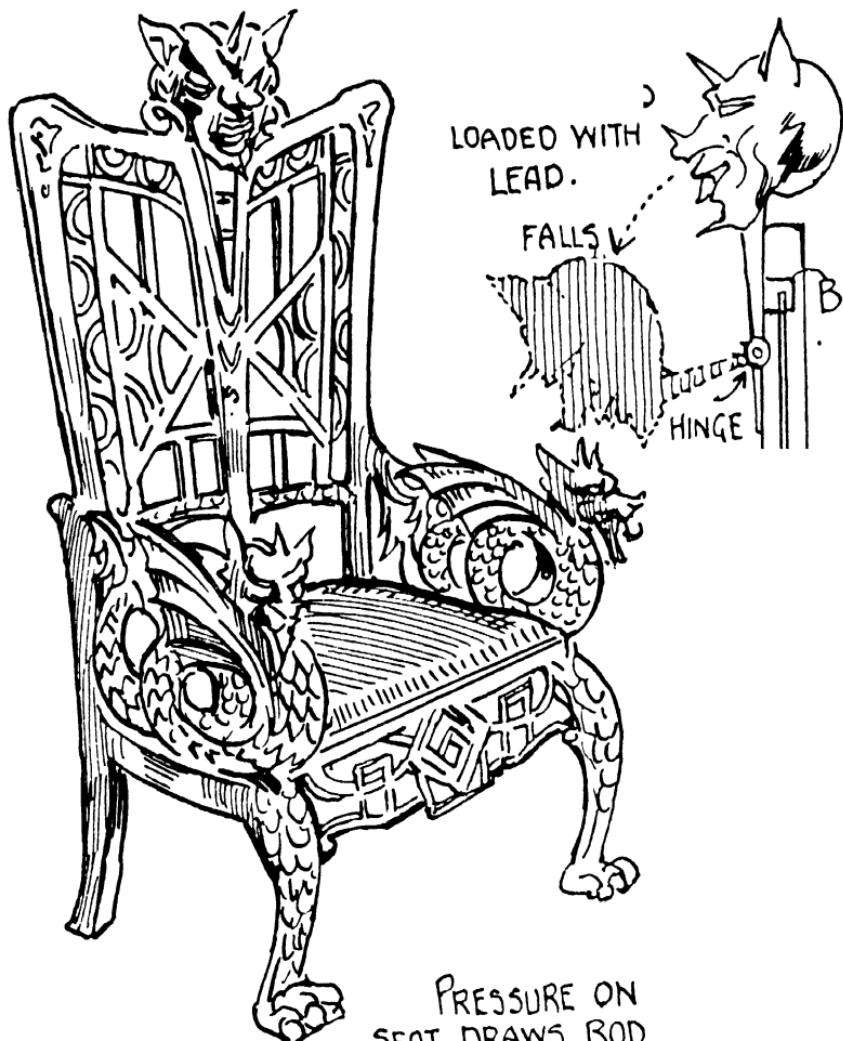
Everyone has a "favourite" arm-chair in his house. The chair is so comfortable that when once the owner is settled in it he does not want to get up in a hurry. From that idea we get a little more "fun with furniture", for in this case the chair is so comfortable that the person who sits in it is really unable to get up in a hurry; in fact, he cannot get up



at all. He might be able to get up with the chair, but that he cannot do because the chair is screwed to the floor.

The illustrations give the trick away. Under the seat of the chair are two hefty springs which force the seat upwards. In this position the seat keeps six curved iron lathes, under the arms of the chair, in position, because these lathes are fitted to the chair with strong spring hinges.

Thus, when anyone sits in the chair he depresses the springs and the seat is lowered. Then the iron lathes spring forward and come across the legs of the sitter, holding him firmly to the chair. If the chair is properly made the sitter will not



be able to rise until someone comes forward to release him.

Anyone who has an old piano can easily make it into a very effective magical joke.

The piano is shown to visitors, who are told that it is a very valuable old instrument. After the piano has been duly inspected and admired the host switches the conversation on to another subject for a few minutes. Then the visitors should be surprised to see the valuable old instrument crawl slowly across the room!

Here again the secret is very simple. The piano is only a case with a man inside it!

## CHAPTER XVII

# SEVEN LESSONS IN MAGIC FOR THE BEGINNER

### LESSON ONE

THOSE unacquainted with the art of magic may possibly imagine that it is impossible for a teacher of conjuring to impart his knowledge to a pupil except by oral instruction.

If a conjurer depended entirely for his effects on certain difficult movements of his hands there might be something in this idea, but as we will show presently, a conjurer's work is simple enough and quite easy—*when once it is known*. There is really no reason, therefore, why conjuring should not be learned from printed instructions so long as those instructions are given, as they are in this case, by a performer with long practical experience of his work.

Perhaps the first thing that the beginner ought to learn—and it is a fact that should always be in his mind when he is engaged in learning a new trick—is this. The audience are concerned entirely with the effect of the trick; that is to say, what the conjurer apparently does. The method he employs to produce that effect is of no interest to them. It is obvious, therefore, that if there are two ways of doing a trick—a difficult way and an easy way—the conjurer gains no advantage by choosing the difficult way. On the contrary, he may possibly handicap himself—a beginner will certainly do so—by choosing the difficult way, because his attention will be so taken up with what he is actually doing, that he will not be able to give all his mind to the presentation of the trick, that is to say, the work of displaying the trick to the best advantage.

There are exceptions to every rule, and perhaps the exception to the rule—the easiest way is the best—is to be found in many of the standard card tricks. Audiences have

become accustomed to regard the conjurer who specializes in card tricks as a man who performs by means of sleight of hand only. The fact that a man performs with a pack of cards is a kind of silent proof that he is not assisted by any mechanical contrivances, and the average audience is quick to grasp that fact. The beginner is strongly advised to learn a few sleight-of-hand tricks with cards, since it is obviously an advantage to be able to give a performance at any time and any place, so long as there is a pack of cards there. Nevertheless, there are several excellent card tricks which can be performed without any sleight of hand, and the man who presents them well will easily earn the credit of having done some most difficult sleight-of-hand feats.

The beginner who cultivates the society of conjurers—and he can do this by becoming a member of the Magicians' Club—is sure to hear this maxim repeated again and again: "It isn't what you do, but the way you do it, that matters." By "the way you do it" is not meant the method you employ, but the effect you are able to produce on your audience. To produce the right effect with a trick you must take care to make everything quite plain to the audience. There are many tricks which are familiar enough to all conjurers but which the average audience has never seen. Therefore, unless the conjurer makes himself properly understood he cannot expect his trick to go well. There must be no doubt in the minds of the audience as to what you have apparently done. Of course, there is no reason why you should not be as merry as possible while you are explaining what you are doing, but to convert a trick into a peg on which to hang a lot of jokes is not legitimate conjuring. The trick should be the first consideration.

Standard works on conjuring should be studied by the beginner. Knowledge breeds knowledge. The cleverest musician cannot compose a bar of music until he has learned the theory of music. When the beginner has passed through the elementary stage of magic he will wish to create his own tricks, and he will find himself very much at sea in doing this unless he knows how to produce his effects.

Another point the beginner should bear in mind is this. There are many different roads to success in conjuring. One man travels one way, another man prefers quite a different path. Let the beginner cultivate any originality he may have and follow his own bent. He will then gradually acquire an easy, natural style of his own, and that is the best of all styles. The beginner should certainly see all the famous magicians at their work, but he is strongly advised not to copy any one of them. He should be himself.

There is no reason why a beginner who is willing to work hard should not blossom out into a professional conjurer, with the ability to earn a good income, in less than a year. But he must be content to walk before he can run. He should acquire the habit of taking a trick to pieces, as it were, and devoting his attention to each piece separately.

For example, the beginner should start by asking himself: What is the effect of this trick to be? Is it a good, simple effect, such as would be understood by any audience of average intelligence? How can I make that effect clear? How can I do that in the fewest possible words?

Having found satisfactory answers to those questions the beginner should then devote some time to learning the best way of actually doing the trick. When he has done that he will know just how much "patter"—that is to say, how much talking—will be necessary. The beginner should then rehearse his "patter" apart from the trick, and then he should blend the two together. The easiest trick should not be presented, even to one's intimate friends, until it has been properly rehearsed.

Perhaps, by this time, the beginner will be asking himself the question: Is all this worth while? What can I earn if I set out to become a professional conjurer? Well, Mr. David Devant has stated publicly that he was once offered £18,000 for a year's work. Any music-hall manager will tell you that an illusionist's salary may vary from £100 to £300 a week, a sum that leaves plenty of margin for necessary expenses connected with the "show".

But perhaps the beginner has no ambition to "go on the

halls". Well, a good sleight-of-hand man (he need not necessarily devote himself exclusively to sleight-of-hand tricks) can be sure of anything from £300 a year, and he will not have to work hard to earn that income. The big illusionist who performs at music-halls cannot expect to be in work all the year round. Holidays are very necessary for many reasons, and when a big illusionist takes a holiday his expenses still go on, because he has to keep his band of assistants together and meet the expenses of renovating old apparatus and producing new effects, and so on.

In any case the beginner may be certain that if he works hard and determines to overcome all difficulties he can earn a good income with magic.

We will conclude this introduction to magic by teaching the beginner a very simple but very effective card trick which can be performed without any sleight of hand whatever.

The conjurer comes forward with a pack of cards which he shuffles as he speaks.

"Here is a pack of cards. I deal off a few on the table and square up the little packet—so. Now, when I turn my back I should like someone to take a few cards, one at a time, from the bottom of the little packet and put them on the top and then square up the little packet again. But be sure to remember how many cards you move from the bottom to the top—one at a time."

When this has been done the conjurer once more faces his audience, picks up the little packet of cards, glances at them, asks the person who helped him to think—merely to think—of the number of cards he moved. Then the conjurer announces the number. This is one of the very few tricks which the conjurer can repeat; in nearly every case he should decline the invitation to "do it again". Finally the conjurer takes the little packet of cards, shuffles them into the remainder of the pack, and, if anyone should suspect that the conjurer has been making use of marked cards, he is at liberty to examine the pack, for the cards are not prepared in any way.

This is how the effect is brought about. Before doing the trick, the conjurer secretly arranges ten cards on the top



DAVY BURNABY

a favourite comedian, late of the Co-Optimists. Burnaby is an expert conjurer and often performs tricks in productions



of the pack. The cards may be of any suits but the numbers of the pips must run from the ace to the ten, the ace being the top card.

The conjurer gives a false shuffle to the pack by holding the cards in the right hand with the faces towards the audience and shuffling them, one at a time, from the bottom of the pack, into the left hand. It is not necessary to shuffle the whole of the pack, and the conjurer takes care not to disarrange the top ten cards. He deals off the top ten cards on the table (without calling attention to the number), and thus the "ten card" becomes the top card of the little packet and the ace the bottom card. Now, it will be obvious that if someone removes a few cards one at a time from the bottom to the top of the little packet of ten cards the top card will tell the number.

When the cards have been moved and the conjurer faces the audience again he picks up the little packet in his right hand, pushes forward the top card slightly so as to get a glimpse of the index, and so tells the number of cards that have been moved.

When the conjurer wishes to repeat the trick he merely remembers the number of cards that were first moved and adds to that number the number of the "key card"—which in the first case was one—the top card.

Thus, suppose that in the first place two cards were moved. The top card will be two. Add two to the number of the key card (one) and you get three, and the third card from the top will tell you the number of the next lot of cards moved. For example, to continue with our experiment, if the second person moved three cards, the third card will give the number —three. Add that number to the position of that card in the packet (the third) and you get six, and the next time cards are moved the sixth card will give you the number.

In time the number of the "key card" will be greater than ten; when that happens the conjurer merely has to deduct ten from the result of his little calculation. The conjurer must impress on his audience that they must move at least one card, but they must not move all of them. If no

cards are moved, the effect is exactly the same as it would be if all the cards were moved.

Here we have an excellent little mystery which anyone can present with half an hour's practise.

#### LESSON TWO

A conjurer of great experience once said to me: "There is only one way of learning conjuring: get hold of a few tricks and start doing them."

In one sense the man was right; in another sense the advice was incomplete. One might almost as well tell a child that the way to learn to read is to get hold of some letters, put them together, and see what they sound like. The child is saved an endless amount of quite unnecessary trouble if a teacher is at hand to explain words and letters; expert assistance is equally necessary to the man who wants to learn conjuring.

Apparently there is nothing easier than to go to a shop, buy some tricks, have them explained, and go home and rehearse them. In theory—yes, that is simple enough, but in practice all kinds of difficulties arise.

The man who is selling you the trick does not know, cannot be expected to know, your own capabilities as a conjurer or the conditions under which you propose to give a conjuring entertainment, and so on. Without this knowledge he may sell you a trick which may be of no use to you at all.

Now, experience has shown me that the best tricks for a drawing-room are those which can be given under any conditions—that is to say, with the audience close to you or even behind you; further, the best tricks are those which can be given without the use of any special kind of table or servante (a secret shelf behind the table), and which can be given in front of a looking-glass if necessary. Small mirrors abound in some drawing-rooms, and the conjurer has to be prepared for these.

It will be found that these conditions limit one's choice of tricks. However, the following programme will be found

to be quite effective. I have purposely chosen easy tricks, and I have added the necessary "patter" for each trick, since this is usually the weakest part of the beginner's performance.

The conjurer should prepare for the performance by asking for a small table, and, if possible, he should place the table in a corner of the room. Then, when he stands behind the table he should face the opposite corner of the room. This position is necessary in order that persons sitting at the ends of the rows of seats should not be able to see anything that may go on "behind the scenes"; that is to say, in the conjurer's palms. The conjurer should have a screen behind which he can deposit his tricks, and there should be a small table behind the screen so that the conjurer does not have to stoop to pick up anything from the floor. This screen is not absolutely necessary to the conjurer who is going to perform without apparatus, since there is nothing to be hidden until it is actually wanted. Still, it is as well to have the screen.

The conjurer comes forward with three little pieces of tissue paper in his hand and begins:

"I am going to try and mystify you with a few simple conjuring tricks. For my first trick I use these pieces of tissue paper. I am going to burn these by the simple method of applying a match to them." (He picks up a match-box from the table and lights the papers.) "From the ashes of these pieces of paper I produce three little pieces of ribbon—red, white and blue—and by blending these together I get something which does not need any description." (Here the conjurer shows a Union Jack.)

*Explanation.* The match-box is a large one, and half the drawer is sticking out of the case. In the space in the case is concealed a small coil of ribbons. To prepare these, place the ribbons together, roll them up and then stitch the last ends together. A small ring should be sewn to the ends, so that the conjurer can feel the sewn ends without having to look in his hand for them. He holds the papers in his right hand. He puts them down on the table while he lights the match and, in closing the box, forces the coil of ribbons into his left hand. He casually pulls back his left sleeve and in doing so

gets the flag, which was concealed in the bend of the elbow, into his right hand. A "conjuring flag" can easily be screwed up into a small ball and hidden under a fold of the sleeve in the bend of the elbow.

The conjurer should practise before a mirror; the trick is not difficult, and it is very effective as an opening trick.

"For my second trick," the conjurer continues, "I use three hats, which I place on the table, and nine pieces of tissue paper—three red, three white, and three blue. I roll these into small balls and place three red balls in front of this hat, three white in front of the middle hat, and three blue in front of the third hat. Now for the trick. I put a red ball in the first hat, a white in the middle hat, and a blue one in the third hat. I'll do that again, putting a red one into the first hat, a blue one in the third hat, and a white one in the middle hat. I repeat that—a red one in the first hat, a white one in the middle hat, and a blue one in the last hat. Now we should have three red balls in the first hat, three white in the second, and three blue in the third; but directly we wave the magic wand over the hats the balls travel about invisibly and we now find a red, a white and a blue ball in each hat." (The conjurer turns the hats over and shows that he has spoken truly.)

For the secret of this trick I am indebted to a book called "Magicians' Tricks" by Henry Hatton and Adrian Plate, but in that book the trick is described as being done with billiard balls. The conjurer will find that it is more effective when the balls are made of paper in front of the audience, because everyone can then see that there is no trickery about the balls.

The secret is quite simple. The conjurer should stand to the right of his table and level with it. Note the order in which he goes to the hats to place the balls inside them. He picks up a red ball and merely pretends to put it in the first hat. It is concealed in the hand by bending the second and third fingers over it. He then picks up a white ball and, in the act of pretending to put it into the hat, palms it in the same way and drops in the red ball. In the act of pretending to put a blue ball into the third hat he hides the blue ball

in his hand and drops in the white ball. He then goes back to the first hat, pretends to drop in a red ball, but really drops in the blue concealed in his hand. He then goes to the third hat, pretends to drop in a blue ball and drops in the red. Then he goes to the middle hat and pretends to drop in a white ball, but really drops in the blue. He returns to the first hat, picks up the red ball and drops it into the hat, and also drops in the white ball in his hand. The remaining white and blue balls are dropped into their respective hats openly; there is no deception about these movements. It will then be found that each hat contains a red ball, a white ball and a blue ball.

“Now for a little spiritualistic trick,” says the conjurer. “Here is a small piece of stout string and here is a ring of jade, stolen from a Chinese temple of great antiquity. . . . Well, it came either from China or Birmingham—perhaps it was Birmingham. I shall be glad if someone will kindly examine both the ring and the string. And now, sir, will you please tie the ends of the string on my two wrists. If you would like to seal the knots, pray do so. Now this trick is generally presented—not as a trick—by spiritualists, who give their séances in the dark. I do not propose to bother you to turn out all the lights, but I will just step behind my screen for half a minute.” (He steps behind the screen and continues to talk.) “Will someone keep the time? I don’t think half a minute is up yet.” (Comes back to audience.) “Still, in that short time I have contrived, as you see, to pass the ring on the string, although the ends are still tied tightly round my wrists. Will you kindly identify your knots and seals, sir? I haven’t tampered with them, have I? And now, perhaps, you would like to remove the ring without untying the knots. You give it up? Then I must do it myself, but I prefer to do it behind the screen.” (Goes there and returns immediately.) “You see, the ring is off the string once more and the knots are still intact.”

This is a very fine trick for a drawing-room, and the secret is quite simple. The conjurer has two rings alike. They can be bought at Will Goldston’s. One ring the conjurer has

up his sleeve before the trick commences. He comes forward with the other ring and has his wrists tied. When he goes behind the screen, all he has to do is to put the examined ring down on the table and pull the ring concealed in his sleeve over his wrists, when it is on the string. To get the ring off he merely reverses the process.

An extra piece of advice to the beginner. Do not scorn this trick because it is "so simple". The best tricks are invariably simple, and this is one of the best.

The conjurer proceeds with his next trick.

"Here is a packet of cigarette-papers. I remove one paper, tear it in half, and, by means of a little lightning arithmetic, arrive at the fact that I have two pieces of paper. I put these together, tear them in half, and now find that I have four pieces; if I tear them once more I get eight pieces. I screw them up into a little ball"—(show it between the first finger and thumb)—"blow on it, and find that I have—one piece of paper, as at first." The conjurer flicks away the paper and shows his hand empty.

*Explanation.* When the conjurer took the packet of papers from his waistcoat-pocket he secretly took out a single paper, screwed up into a little ball, and concealed it at the tips of his first and second fingers. After he had torn the paper into eight pieces, he screwed them into a little ball and "worked out" the other little ball on to the top of the ball of little pieces. By holding them between his thumb and first finger, he was able to show the two together as one ball. This action also proved to the audience that the conjurer had nothing else concealed in his hand. Afterwards, the conjurer, in the act of undoing the ball made of the whole paper, got the ball of little pieces into the position originally occupied by the whole ball. After he had shown the paper, apparently restored, he rolled it up to flick it away, and in doing so included the ball of little pieces and so got rid of them.

A couple of good card tricks may now be introduced.

The conjurer begins by asking someone to shuffle a pack of cards and to look at any card he pleases and to remember its position in the pack.

“Don’t go beyond a dozen down, because it lengthens the trick unnecessarily. Just look at any card in the first twelve and remember its position, counting from the top of the pack.”

When this has been done the conjurer receives the pack back again and asks someone in the audience to think of any number beyond a dozen. We will suppose that someone says “Fifteen”.

The conjurer puts the cards behind him, and the audience can hear him moving some of the cards, but cannot see what he is doing.

“Very well,” says the conjurer, holding the cards in front of him again. “Now, sir”—this to the man who has thought of a card—“at what position in the pack was the card you selected? Fifth? Very well. We will begin by counting at that number, and we will go on until we reach the number selected by this other gentleman—fifteen.”

The conjurer suits the action to the words, and just before he turns up the fifteenth card he says to the first man: “What was your card, sir? The King of Diamonds? There it is, you see: just where I said it would be.”

*Explanation.* This is a very handy little trick because it works itself. All that the conjurer has to remember is to ask the first man to select a card standing anywhere between one and twelve in the pack, and the second man to choose a number larger than twelve. When the conjurer holds the cards behind him he merely deals off from the top of the pack a number of cards corresponding to the large number chosen. He then places the pack before him, and, asking the man who is thinking of a card what position his card was, he begins by calling the top card that number and deals off until he gets to the larger number, when that card will be the chosen card.

For example, we will suppose that the first man decided to think of the fifth card, and that that card is the five of diamonds. Further, we will suppose that the second man chooses “fourteen” for his number. The conjurer places the cards behind his back, deals fourteen cards, one at a time,

from his left hand into his right, and replaces the cards on the top of the pack. He then puts the pack before him and asks the first man the position of his card. He says "Five". Calling the top card five, the conjurer deals off cards until he comes to fourteen, when that card will be the five of diamonds—the card that the first man selected.

The second trick is of a different kind. The conjurer merely picks up a few cards and puts them, one at a time, on the open palm of his right hand. Then he quietly turns his hand over and makes a few mesmeric passes with his left hand towards the right. He explains that this "puts the 'fluence on". The cards adhere to the right hand as though held close to the hand by means of a magnet. Giving his hand a sudden jerk, the conjurer causes all the cards to fall from his hand to the table. He picks them up and goes back to his screen to prepare for the next trick.

The trick of the mesmerized cards is done by means of one trick card which the conjurer can easily prepare for himself. He cuts a piece about half an inch square from the "joker" of his pack. (The joker is not wanted in any trick.) He sticks half this piece to the centre of one of his cards and bends the remaining half upwards. When the conjurer puts the cards behind his back in the first trick he can easily take this trick card out of the hip pocket of his trousers and add it to the bottom of the pack. The audience, having handled the pack for the first trick, are not aware of the presence of this trick card.

To do the trick, the conjurer lays the trick card on the palm of his right hand and manages to get the little piece sticking out between the second and third fingers. He then arranges a few cards under this trick card and, of course, when he turns his hand over, all the cards remain in their places until he opens his fingers and so releases the trick card. Then all the cards fall to the table.

The last trick is of a more showy kind.

The conjurer asks several persons in the audience to write down some figures on a small piece of paper. When this has been done—or while the paper is being handed round

the audience—the conjurer shows an empty envelope and a piece of plain card about the size of a lady's visiting-card. He shows both sides of it. Having placed the card in the envelope, he seals up the envelope and gives it to someone in the audience, with the request that he or she will take care of it until the end of the trick.

By this time the members of the audience who have been asked to write figures on the piece of paper have probably completed their task. The conjurer takes back the paper and begins to add up the figures.

"But perhaps you may suspect my addition," he says. "Will someone who is a good arithmetician just cast up this little column for me and let the audience know the result? The number is? Twenty-nine. Thank you very much. I tear the paper into small pieces, and as I do so the marks on the paper collect in the air and form themselves again together. You will find that they have now passed on to that card in the envelope which this gentleman has been holding all the time, and that they have written themselves down there in the form of the answer to our addition sum. Will you kindly open the envelope yourself, sir, and hold up the card so that everyone may see it?"

This is done, and everyone sees a large 29 on the card.

When the conjurer showed the plain card before he put it in the envelope he had a little pack of similar cards on his table. The card he held up was really two cards held close together and presented as one card. On the under side of the top card the conjurer had written "29" in large figures. The under card hid the figures from view.

In showing the envelope the conjurer carelessly laid the "card" (really two cards) on the top of the pack of cards on his table, and after he had shown that the envelope was empty and unprepared he picked up the card again—but this time the single card only—and placed it in the envelope.

The paper on which the audience wrote their figures was exchanged for another paper on which the conjurer had written several figures which, added together, came to 29.

Various pieces of apparatus are sold for producing an

effect similar to the one I have described, but if the trick is presented in this way the audience can pick up and handle anything used in the trick, and then they will be no wiser than they were at the beginning.

### LESSON THREE

The conjurer who appears at a concert or other entertainment should ascertain from the secretary what length of performance is expected from him. Secretaries like this kind of consideration shown to them, and the conjurer loses nothing by remembering that fact. If the conjurer is asked to give what he pleases, he should arrange to give a "turn" of about ten minutes at an after-dinner entertainment or a quarter of an hour if the "turn" is the principal one at a variety concert.

Since this question of time is a very important one, the conjurer should form the habit of timing all his tricks, so that directly he is asked to shorten or lengthen his entertainment he knows what to leave out or what to add to that which he proposes to do. It is an easy matter to keep a list of the tricks one performs, with the time that each trick takes to do. A little margin must be allowed in the case of tricks requiring the assistance of members of the audience, since the time occupied in inducing members of the audience to come up to assist the conjurer will vary slightly at each performance. Still, the conjurer ought to be able to calculate within a couple of minutes what time any given programme will take. If he performs a few tricks for which the help of members of the audience is not required, the calculation as to the length of the show will be more exact.

Personally, I think that if the turn is a short one the conjurer should not waste any time in seeking the assistance of anyone in the audience. Valuable time is lost while waiting for someone to "come up", and the attention of the audience is not held. A better effect is obtained by presenting three or four good magical effects in brisk, smart style.

The first trick should be short and to the point—something which engages the attention of the audience at once.

Here is a good trick which answers the purpose well. It is presented in a variety of ways, but this, I consider, is as good as any of them and better than most of them. Let the conjurer come forward with this introduction.

“One or two simple conjuring tricks. Here is the magic wand, without which a conjurer can do nothing. Of course some people think that the wand is only a piece of wood. So it is—wood” (knocking it on the table), “solid wood” (knocking it again), “all wood” (knocking it on the head). “I mean the wand, of course. I wrap the wand in a piece of paper and the wand at once wanders.” (Screw up the paper into a ball and show that the wand has disappeared.) “It hasn’t gone very far, because here it is—in my pocket.” (Take it out of the left trouser pocket.)

The wand has a “shell” of stout paper over it; of course the shell matches the wand. In wrapping up the wand, the conjurer holds it for a second behind the paper, and in that moment allows the solid wand to slide out of the shell and down the hollow centre leg of the conjuring table. A similar wand is taken from the left-hand trouser pocket. It may be necessary to have the pocket longer than the usual pocket. When the wand is produced from the pocket it is once more knocked on the table to show that it is solid.

The conjurer who is performing frequently at concerts will find his work simplified considerably if he takes his own little table with him. A light table that takes to pieces can easily be carried in a suit-case, and then all the trouble of getting a small table at the hall where one is to perform is avoided.

A short, smart trick of this kind puts the performer on good terms with his audience. Having thus secured people’s attention, he can go on to something else. I suggest the following:

“For my next trick I use two handkerchiefs—one red, one white. For the benefit of anyone who may be colour-blind, I may say that this is the red and this the white. I tie the red to the white—or the white to the red—roll them up into a little ball and the current of air dissolves the knot—

so." (The two handkerchiefs have become untied.) "Here is another handkerchief—blue, but not half so blue as I shall look if this trick doesn't come off. I tie the red and the blue together, place them in this empty tumbler, and cover them with the white handkerchief. Here is another handkerchief—lemon coloured; in fact, it's a small lemon. I throw the lemon at the other two handkerchiefs and it goes"—the handkerchief vanishes—"and if we have had any luck we shall find that the lemon-coloured handkerchief has tied itself in between the other two. There they are—all tied together." (The conjurer takes out the three handkerchiefs from the glass and shows them tied together.)

The first part of the trick is a little piece of sleight of hand. In tying the two handkerchiefs together the conjurer really ties one round the other in a slip-knot, and when he rolls the two together he secretly pulls them apart.

The next part of the trick is known to all dealers in magical apparatus as "the twentieth century handkerchief trick". The blue handkerchief is really a double handkerchief with a lemon-coloured one inside it. A corner of the lemon-coloured one protrudes from a hole in one corner of the blue one, and the conjurer ties the red one to this corner. Therefore, when he goes to the glass for the final effect of the trick all that the conjurer has to do is to get hold of a corner of the red handkerchief and jerk the lot out of the glass. This action pulls the lemon-coloured handkerchief out of the blue one, and as a corner of the lemon-coloured one is sewn to the corner of the blue all three handkerchiefs appear to be tied together.

There is still one more thing to be explained. How was the lemon-coloured handkerchief caused to vanish? There are many ways of producing this effect. One of the best is brought about by means of the handkerchief-vanisher, obtainable from Will Goldston's. The handkerchief may be placed in a glass lamp-chimney, or be merely held in the hand, and with the aid of this vanisher it is caused to disappear instantaneously and without the slightest movement of the arms or hands.

Now for a smaller trick. The conjurer takes from his

pocket a strip of coloured paper about eighteen inches long and an inch and a half wide.

“This trick,” says the conjurer, “does not need any description, so I won’t say a word about it—not a word—not one—no—several words. A piece of paper.” (Tears it in half.) “Now two pieces of paper.” (Tears it again.) “Now four.” (Tears it again.) “Now eight.” (Tears again.) “Now sixteen. Now” (going through the action of tearing, but not really tearing it) “one piece of paper.” He holds it up between his first finger and thumb and shows that he has nothing else concealed in his hands. He then throws the paper out to the audience.

This excellent little effect is brought about by means of what is known as a “thumb fake”—a metal cap shaped like the top of the thumb and painted flesh colour. Inside this little fake is concealed a strip of tissue paper similar to the one which the conjurer takes from his pocket. The strip should be pleated before it is put into the fake, so that it can be drawn apart quickly at the end of the trick. Of course the conjurer gets the thumb fake on to his right thumb in the action of taking the visible strip of paper from his right-hand waistcoat pocket. After he has torn the strip into sixteen pieces he gets the fake off his thumb, draws out the piece concealed there and, inserting the sixteen pieces once more, replaces the fake on his thumb. In holding up the restored strip at the end, the thumb with the fake on it is behind the paper and so is not seen by the audience. When the conjurer throws the strip to the audience and holds out his hands showing them empty, he takes care to point his thumbs towards the audience, and if the hands are moved slightly at the same time—a perfectly natural movement of the hands—the fake will not be noticed by anyone.

The conjurer now has to get rid of the thumb fake, and the simplest way to do this is to take a pack of cards from the inside pocket of the coat and leave the fake behind in the pocket.

If the performance is to last for ten or twelve minutes the conjurer will not have time for more than one card trick.

What is that trick to be? (I say only one card trick, because there must be a good finishing trick—something big and showy.)

I recommend the learner to get two books: "The Young Conjurer" and "More Modern Card Tricks Without Apparatus", by the Author. The books are inexpensive, and there are many good card tricks explained in both—tricks which are worth considerably more than the price charged to any performer. I recommend the learner to study a trick which does not call for the assistance of anyone from the audience, and to work up that trick until he can perform it perfectly.

"For my concluding experiment," says the conjurer, "I require a little warmth." He takes up a match-box, takes out a match, lights it, and pretends to warm both hands at the flame. Suddenly he throws out a small coil of ribbons—red, white and blue. He gathers up the ribbons towards him and throws out another and larger bunch of ribbons. Finally he produces a large Union Jack on a flag-staff, and he waves the flag while the kindly pianist plays him off the stage with a few bars of "Rule, Britannia".

The first coil of ribbons was concealed in the match-box. The drawer of the box is pulled partly out of the case, and the coil is put in the case. When the conjurer strikes the match he pushes the drawer back into its place and so pushes the coil of ribbons into his hand. Throwing out this coil, he gets hold of another coil which he has had hidden just inside the opening of the waistcoat. These ribbons can be an inch wide and about four or five yards long. The ends are sewn together and a ring is attached to the sewn ends so that the conjurer can easily get his thumb into the ring. In the act of throwing out the second coil with his right hand the conjurer turns slightly to the left—a natural movement—and with his left hand gets from his left hip-pocket a flag attached to a collapsible staff. Holding the butt end of the staff firmly, he shoots out the staff and the flag unfurls. The whole thing is over so quickly that the audience do not get a chance of seeing how the productions are brought about,

and so the performer brings his turn to a close amid the enthusiastic applause with which all good audiences greet the appearance of the national flag. The flag and staff must be of first-rate quality; otherwise, the flag will be too bulky in the pocket and the staff will not work with the required rapidity.

#### LESSON FOUR

The conjurer who makes up his mind that he will perform only sleight-of-hand tricks will soon find that his choice of first-rate tricks is very limited. There are numbers of good tricks of this kind, but they are really only suitable for small informal gatherings, when the conjurer can have his audience close to him and, possibly, all round him. Of sleight-of-hand tricks which can be presented effectively on a stage there is only a very limited number.

Perhaps one of the most effective of these tricks is that known as the "cards up the sleeve". The effect is as follows:

The conjurer counts off twelve cards, faces towards the audience, and asks his audience to notice that he uses only twelve cards; further, he requests his audience to note some of the cards so that they will know them again when they see them.

The cards are left in the left hand at the conclusion of the opening part of the trick. The conjurer now continues:

"I next want to show you my empty pocket. (He takes out his right-hand pocket.) Of course there is no particular trick about that; that is the normal condition of all my pockets. Now for the trick. Every time I give the cards a little flip I startle them into activity, so that one card leaves my hand, travels across my back, and then hides itself in my empty pocket. You heard the first little flip; that shows the first card has gone." (He openly takes a card from right-hand trouser pocket.) "Now for two at once—two little flips. There they are." (Takes two cards from pocket.) "That makes three. Now another, and another. That makes five cards altogether. I believe I heard someone whisper that the cards do not

travel. I am often suspected of having cards concealed about me somewhere, but I can assure you that I don't do the trick that way. We began with twelve cards, and there are five on the table—five from twelve—seven. The gentleman guessed rightly the very first time." (Counts the cards in left hand and shows seven.) "Now another little flip." (Shows empty right hand and takes card from pocket.) "That leaves six." (Counts six in hand.) "Now for two at once, and another one. That leaves us with nine cards on the table and three in the hand. Two more little flips and two more cards leave the hand and travel right across the back into the pocket. That leaves us with one card. This is the most difficult card of the lot. You have to tell this card to go, and then it doesn't always do what it is told to do. Go. Ah, it's gone this time—but not in the pocket. I am sorry; it slipped down the wrong way and got through a hole in the pocket, and there it is." (Produces from back of right leg.)

This is an old trick, but it never fails to go well, and the magician who performs it well always gets the credit of presenting a good sleight-of-hand trick—which it undoubtedly is.

The trick is performed entirely by sleight of hand. The conjurer must be able to palm well, and also be able to misdirect the attention of his audience by talking to them.

I will now take the learner through the trick and show him how to produce the required effects.

The conjurer holds the twelve cards, faces towards the audience, in the left hand. He counts them, one at a time, into his right hand. The first six are gripped between the first finger and thumb of the right hand; the second six are held between the second finger and thumb. The conjurer takes back the twelve cards into his left hand, but he is able to divide the twelve into two equal parts with his second finger, and he keeps his second finger between the two halves. As the thumb presses down on the cards the division in the middle is not seen.

The conjurer now draws attention to his empty pocket, which he pulls out and returns to its place. When he says: "Of course there's no trick about that," etc., he is sure to get

a smile from the audience. The attention of the spectators is diverted for the moment, and at that precise moment the conjurer coolly palms off six cards. He does this in the act of taking the twelve cards from the left hand as though he merely wanted to draw attention to the fact that he had nothing in his left hand except the cards.

The palming is done in this way. The back of the right hand is turned towards the audience. Directly it covers the cards the left second finger (which, you will remember, divides the twelve cards into two packets) pushes the top six into the right palm and the hand closes over them. At the same moment the right hand takes the other cards (apparently the whole twelve) out of the right hand by holding them by the end nearest the finger-tips and so turning them with the faces towards the audience. Afterwards the right hand, with the six palmed cards, grips the coat lapel and so hides the cards with a perfectly natural movement of the hand.

After the first flip (which is caused by merely drawing the third finger quickly over a corner of the cards) the right hand dives into the right pocket, brings out one card and leaves five behind.

When five cards have been caused to travel invisibly into the pocket the conjurer counts the six cards in the left hand but makes the number appear to be seven. In taking the cards quickly from the left hand into the right the conjurer counts the first three fairly, but when he gets to four he merely pretends to take a card. If the dealing is done well the false card is never noticed.

The production of the next card is easy, since it is already in the pocket. The conjurer then palms off three more in the same way that he palms the first six. Then he has to palm two more and finally he "back-palms" the last card, and puts his hand quickly into his left pocket. He has been using his right pocket all the time, but the audience never take any notice of the change. Directly he has back-palmed the card he brings his right hand down behind his right leg and the left hand takes the card from its concealed position in the right hand and produces it.

To back-palm a card, hold it at one end, in the centre, between the second finger and thumb. Bend the second finger; extend the first and little fingers and slide them down the edge of the card which can thus be held at the back of the hand between the little finger and third finger and the first and second finger. It is quite an easy feat with one card. The hand must be held horizontally with the palm facing the audience, and the hand should be moved quickly downwards and then upwards while the fingers make the movements to secure the card at the back of the hand. Simultaneously the left hand goes to the left pocket and directly that is shown to be empty, the right hand comes down behind the leg and the left hand takes the card from that position.

When the learner has mastered the knack of palming cards neatly and well, he is in a position to do a number of good sleight-of-hand tricks with cards, and the practice he thus gets will enable him to palm other objects, such as billiard balls, coins, etc. This palming practice should always be done in front of a mirror, and the learner must avoid looking at his hands while he is palming. When the learner is performing to an audience he must take care to hold his hand in such a way that no one can get a glimpse of the palm; if he keeps his hand with the back facing the audience and remembers to hold his hand near his body, but in an easy, natural position, he will have no difficulty in concealing the cards. In all probability he will come to the conclusion—after the first five minutes' practice—that his hands are too small for conjuring. Every beginner thinks that. However, nowadays the use of the small cards, of the French size, is so general that the conjurer can always use cards of that size if he wishes to do so. Still, I should not advise a learner to give up trying to use cards of the full size until he is quite certain that his hands are too small. There is always the chance that one may be asked to do some tricks with a borrowed pack of cards, and if that pack happened to be a pack of large cards and the conjurer was in the habit of using smaller ones he would find himself compelled to decline to perform.

The conjurer can make some of his work lighter than

it otherwise would be by using special pockets in his trousers and coat. The special coat pockets, known as "profondes", are large and are put on inside the tails of the coat. The top of the pocket should be on a level with the knuckles of the hand when the hand is hanging at the side. If the conjurer has something palmed in his hand and he wants to get rid of it, all he has to do is to turn slightly to the right (with some excuse for doing so) and drop the concealed article into his coat pocket.

The extra pockets in the trousers are much smaller. They are put on at the back of the trousers and are below the ordinary hip pockets. These pockets, known as "pochettes", are used for holding small articles which the conjurer wants to get secretly into his hand during a performance.

Many a good conjuring trick is simplified for the performer by means of a servante at the back of the table. The servante is merely a secret shelf or bag at the back of the table; it is hidden, of course, by a cloth on the table. Some servantes are fixed to the back of chairs and are in the form of small net bags. These are useful for the card conjurer who wants to exchange a pack of ordinary cards for a pack that has been specially prepared or arranged in order. All kinds of servantes are on sale at the magical establishment of Will Goldston's, who are always ready to assist learners in the choice of such things and to show them how they can be used for the performance of certain tricks.

#### LESSON FIVE

Some of our finest performers have never had a lesson in conjuring in their lives. They have picked up their knowledge from books and have developed that knowledge by using their own brains. Still, such men would probably be the first to admit that they would have saved themselves a good deal of time and trouble and expense if they had had personal tuition from an experienced man after they had acquired some knowledge of the art of magic from books.

In recommending the student to study magic from books

I also advise him to have some lessons from a professional performer after he has acquired a certain amount of book knowledge. The lessons will serve the purpose of examinations in magic. The professional performer will naturally be able to correct any little mistakes which the amateur may have been in the habit of making when putting his knowledge to practical use, that is to say, when he has been trying to perform the tricks he has learned from books.

Having made himself master of the contents of these books, and having put that knowledge to practical use by performing some of the tricks he has learned from them, the student will then be in a position to think out new tricks for himself, and he will usually find that these tricks are the best tricks in his repertoire, because they will be exactly suited to his own individual style. The inventor-magician naturally thinks out tricks which he likes, and when he tries to find out means of producing those effects, all he has to do is to recall some of the methods explained in the books. For example, he may wish to cause a handkerchief to vanish. Well, he will recall the various methods explained in the books for producing that simple effect.

A very simple way of inventing a trick is to take a piece from one trick, a piece from another, and so on, and then to combine these various pieces into one novel series of effects. A man with brains who can make up a few new "combinations"—as they are called—has, to all intents and purposes, a set of new tricks at his fingers' ends, and he is in the happy position of knowing that these tricks will never be imitated by others, since they are his own.

One word of advice to the student who is embarking on a study of magic from books. Let him acquire all the knowledge he can get in this way, but let him remember that, in one sense, there is no "best way" of doing the trick. The best way is the way which suits you best. Therefore, if you can improve upon any of the methods explained in the books, you are always at liberty to do so! indeed, you should do so. Also, I strongly advise the student to get out of his head that the conjurer is a man who does difficult things with his hands

and fingers. Some of the best tricks in the world are quite simple—when you know them—and, therefore, in thinking out new tricks the student should always aim at simplicity. He will then be in a position to devote his energies to thinking out the ways by which he can make his tricks as effective as possible. Many a beginner fails temporarily simply because he muddles about and does not make his tricks clear to the audience. The plot of a trick should be as clear as a plot of a play. A plot of a good play can always be stated in a few words. It is the same with a good conjuring trick. The performer apparently accomplishes a miracle, and there should be no doubt in the minds of the audience as to what the conjurer has apparently done; if there is any doubt you may be sure that the performer has made one or two mistakes—or possibly both. Either he has wasted his time in learning a poor trick, or else he has not given sufficient thought to the question of “presentation”. Possibly the trick is a good one, but the audience have been prevented by the performer’s inexperience from seeing how good it really is. A good deal of this kind of knowledge is derived only from practical experience, but at the same time the student who has a good practical knowledge of his work and has acquired that knowledge from the best books, is less likely to make the mistakes I have indicated than is the performer whose knowledge of magic is not sound.

#### LESSON SIX

What is the difference between an illusion and a trick?

There is no hard and fast rule to guide us to a proper answer, but magicians generally mean by a “trick” a magical effect which is brought about by the use of the hands; that is to say, small articles are used in the trick. Magicians speak of an “illusion” when they mean a big trick in which a human being or some large animal is employed. For example, the conjurer who picks up a duck, wraps it in a sheet of newspaper and causes it to vanish, is doing a trick; but if the same man caused a girl to vanish, he would be doing an illusion.

The simplest illusions are usually the best. For example,

we will suppose that the conjurer has two assistants who hold a small screen on the stage. The magician walks behind the screen and stands there; the audience see the top of his head. The performer suddenly vanishes and appears at the same moment in the auditorium.

This very simple effect can be produced in a very simple way. Directly the performer gets behind the screen he removes his wig he has been wearing and puts it on a small wire frame attached to a long rod passing through the stage. An assistant under the stage is able to move the wig about to give the audience the impression that the performer is still standing behind the screen, but of course the performer has dropped down a trap in the stage and is now making the best of his way to the back of the auditorium. When the audience have been kept in suspense for a few seconds—they do not know what is going to happen—the assistant beneath the stage suddenly pulls the wig beneath the stage, closes up the little trap through which it passed, and, simultaneously, knocks over the screen. At the same moment the performer walks in at the back of the hall.

It will be understood that this very simple illusion could be performed in a variety of ways. In one sense it forms the basis of many other illusions which depend for their effect upon the audience being made to believe that the performer is in a certain place when he is really elsewhere. The usual method of producing this effect is to employ "doubles"; that is to say, at one moment in the illusion an assistant dressed like the performer takes his place, and the assistant, in passing behind some screen, or cabinet, or other piece of apparatus assumes the disguise of the performer. This principle has been rather worked to death, but when employed skilfully it is still a good one.

The student who has studied his "Modern Magic" to advantage will be in the possession of an important secret which has been used many times by illusionists. Let the student turn to page 471 and learn how "The Sphinx" is performed. The use of mirrors is fully explained, and "mirrors", placed in a certain way, are the secret of many a good illusion.

Here is a simple illusion which can be worked single-handed in any drawing-room. The performer shows a large black bag or sack. He gets into it and someone from the audience is invited to come and tie up the mouth of the sack and seal it. A screen is placed round the performer. Presently he comes forward with the sack on his arm, and once more the sack can be examined, and the person who tied up the performer can identify the knots and seals, which are intact.

The secret is simple enough. Some of the stitches at the bottom of the sack are not genuine. The performer, who has a small electric flash-lamp in his pocket, gets hold of a knot of the thread which apparently sews up the end and pulls it. The thread comes out easily and leaves a hole large enough to allow the performer to get out. He is provided with a large needle already threaded with black thread. He runs this backwards and forwards through the sack, closing up the hole, and once more the sack can be examined. So simple! And, if you are thinking that it is so simple that the audience *must* see through it, let me assure you that it is just the simple trick or illusion which is always the most baffling.

The audience are so keen on looking out for some extraordinarily clever "move" that they never suspect the simple secret of a "drawn thread". It is the same with many other illusions; their secrets are childishly simple—when you know them.

Sometimes one can devise an illusion by taking a small trick and making it up in a large size, using a girl in place of one of the small objects of the original trick. The illusionist has this advantage over the sleight-of-hand conjurer. The conjurer uses small objects which he has to manipulate himself. The illusionist, employing a girl in his effects, can rely upon the help of the girl to disappear or appear magically. On the other hand, the illusionist is always at this disadvantage. His apparatus must be in perfect working order. If anything should go wrong he is "done"; if the sleight-of-hand conjurer makes a mistake he can cover it up—that is to say, if he is worth his salt as a conjurer.

The student is advised to see the performances of all the

leading illusionists, not with the idea of copying any of their illusions, but with the object of studying the art of presentation—that is to say, the way to show illusions and tricks to the best advantage. The student who pursues this method will also be able to get an idea of the various principles used in the making of illusions and, if he is of an inventive turn of mind, he will be able to use some of those principles in the making of other illusions. The principles employed in many illusions are common property, and many a good, novel illusion is really only a novel effect brought about by old methods.

In inventing and creating new illusions the student should keep the word "simplicity" before him. The illusion which is so "tricky" to work that there is always a danger that it will go wrong at a public performance is never a good one. To arrive at the simplest method of bringing about an effect the student will probably go first to some complicated and difficult method, but he must not be discouraged at that stage. In time, if he sets to work to think on the right lines, he will discover how the difficult parts of the illusion can be smoothed away, and then, finally, when he has reduced the whole thing to its simplest form, he will have invented something really good. But, of course, this is not affected without the expenditure of much time and thought.

#### LESSON SEVEN

To some men this will seem the most valuable lesson. Money from Magic. Is there any to be made?

Certainly there is. Moreover, when once you have hit upon a good programme, that is to say, a programme which suits your own individual style and which has been so well rehearsed that you can give a good, smooth performance, the rest is easy. One good programme will earn your living for you for years. Some conjurers do not change their whole programme once in ten years; others prefer to be more up to date. A magician who is a good man of business takes care to have at least two good programmes always at his fingers' ends. He may be engaged to go to the same place two years

running, and it would not look well to do the same tricks for the second engagement. At the same time, if the conjurer has made a very good impression at his first show he may be asked to repeat some of his most successful tricks at his second engagement. Still, no harm is done by having a large repertoire.

How is the magician to advertise? He must walk before he can run. To begin with, he must gain experience by performing as an amateur at charity and other entertainments. The more the better, since the magician is gaining experience and an advertisement at the same time.

When the amateur considers that he is capable of accepting paid engagements, he should write to the various agents (names and addresses in the London Directory), and state what he can do as a magician. Agents are always ready to listen to a conjurer who has tricks that are off the beaten track, and to one who shows by his personal appearance, his manner, his bearing and conversation that he is the kind of man that a lady would like to have in her drawing-room.

Some agents arrange little catalogues of their own, and will accept advertisements in these catalogues from artists on their books.

During the Christmas season the *Evening News* is an excellent advertising medium for the magician wanting advertisements. The *Referee* is another good paper for these advertisements. Work obtained in this way is very pleasurable, since there is no agent to pay for getting it! Still, advertising is not expensive.

When a conjurer has obtained an engagement "off his own bat" he is at liberty, of course, to hand one of his booklets or circulars, with his address, to his client. If his performance has been very successful and the audience appreciative, he will probably be asked by someone present for his name and address, and the easiest and best reply is to hand a circular in which are stated full particulars of the magician's doings. The actual fee required for an entertainment should not be stated in the circular, since fees vary. A word or two on this point later on.

The circular should be well printed on plain paper, and it may have a portrait of the magician inside it. I do not advise the beginner to have a photograph of himself done in the act of performing a trick, because that kind of circular is too hackneyed. A small neat photograph of the head is sufficient.

The magician should state in the circular that he is prepared to arrange his programme to suit his audience. Tricks which are intended for children are not wanted at an after-dinner entertainment at which only adults are present. If he has received any Press notices and testimonials, the magician may have a few of these printed in his circular, but of course he must not mention the names of the writers of the testimonials without their permission. If Press notices are printed the names of the papers should be stated; therefore, if the papers are not fairly well known the notices are best omitted. No one attaches much importance to the opinions of a few obscure country papers.

The printing of the circular should be entrusted to a first-rate firm, and their advice should be followed, since it does not pay a firm of printers to issue a bad circular. The most economical way of buying circulars is to have about five hundred printed at once.

Copies of these circulars should be sent to all agents, but these copies must not have the magician's address inside them. When an agent procures an engagement for a conjurer he does not want that conjurer to do a little business on his own account by giving his address to that client. It is only right and fair that any future business should be done through the agent who secured the engagement.

Fees vary according to the length and style of entertainment given and the time of year, etc. Thus, at Christmas-time—which is harvest-time for conjurers—fees vary from one guinea to five guineas and more, for a town engagement. The guinea fee would be for a beginner; a first-rate conjurer with experience would not look at such a fee during the Christmas season. It is no unusual thing for a conjurer to give three performances of one hour each on one day in the Christmas

season, and therefore the man who is engaged to perform in the country naturally wants a big fee, since he has to waste the afternoon in travelling.

At other times of the year many a good conjurer will accept a small fee to do a show at a dinner. The fee may be a guinea for a quarter of an hour's entertainment, or possibly a guinea and a half or two guineas for two turns of ten minutes each. It is quite an easy matter for a conjurer to accept two or three of these engagements for one evening.

The magician who is engaged to appear at a bazaar is usually paid by the day—four or five guineas—on the understanding that he performs “at frequent intervals”. This kind of work is much lighter than it seems to be to an inexperienced man who has never done any of it. The same short programme can be given half-a-dozen times in the evening. Bazaars are excellent places for working up new tricks!

One engagement frequently leads to others. I have known a man to have a run of twenty engagements in consequence of one very successful entertainment. Success is largely a matter of originality. The conjurer who can do tricks that audiences have not seen before is the conjurer who gets the work, provided that he is acceptable in other ways.

One good way of getting engagements is to address a circular letter to the clergy. Fees for performances at Sunday schools are not high, as a rule, but they form an excellent training for the magician who wishes to gain experience. There are no sterner critics of a conjuring performance than a number of children, and when a conjurer has had some experience of this kind of work he will find that to give an entertainment to an audience of brainy adults is mere child's play to him. As a rule, the cleverer the audience the easier is the conjurer's task.

Engagements in the summer are obtained through agents in the usual way. The pay for performing at piers and other places at the seaside is not large, but this work is usually an excellent advertisement for a good man. A lady with her children goes to see the “conjurer on the pier”, and if he is a good man he probably gets asked for his permanent address.

Then, when the Christmas season comes round, he receives engagements on which he has to pay no commission.

The commission paid to agents varies. Some agents charge ten per cent of the fee when it does not exceed a certain amount, and more than that for a large fee. Other agents charge a bigger commission on any engagement; others pay the performer a fixed fee for every engagement they give him; in that case the performer has no means of knowing what fee the client is paying.

The conjurer who takes pains to develop the business side of his work may soon hope to earn a "decent living" from magic. It will not take him long to get to the £200 a year stage, and from that point to four or five hundred a year is not a very big step. But the learner should bear this in mind: the cultivation of a good manner is almost as important as the ability to do tricks neatly and well. You may be the cleverest magician that ever lived, but if you have the unhappy knack of rubbing people the wrong way you must not expect to earn a magnificent living from magic.

THE END

